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Dominicans in the United States: A Socioeconomic Profile 2022

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**Dominican
Studies Institute**

Research Monograph

Dominicans in the United States:
A Socioeconomic Profile
2022

Ramona Hernandez

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CU | Dominican
NY | Studies Institute

Research Monograph

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Dominican Studies Research Monograph Series

About the Dominican Studies Research Monograph Series

The Dominican Research Monograph Series, a publication of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, documents scholarly research on the Dominican experience in the United States, the Dominican Republic, and other parts of the world. For the most part, the texts published in the series are the result of research projects sponsored by the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute.

About CUNY Dominican Studies Institute

Founded in 1992 and housed at The City College of New York, the Dominican Studies Institute of the City University of New York (CUNY DSI) is the nation's first, university-based research institute devoted to the study of people of Dominican descent in the United States and other parts of the world. CUNY DSI's mission is to produce and disseminate research and scholarship about Dominicans, and about the Dominican Republic itself. The Institute houses the Dominican Archives and the Dominican Library, the first and only institutions in the United States collecting primary and secondary source material about Dominicans. CUNY DSI is the locus for a community of scholars, including doctoral fellows, in the field of Dominican Studies, and sponsors multidisciplinary research projects. The Institute organizes lectures, conferences, and exhibitions that are open to the public.

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Summary of Findings

This research report presents the first detailed study of the socioeconomic status of the Dominican population of the United States as we enter the second decade of the 2000s, including a discussion of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using information provided by the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the United States Census, the study has the following conclusions.

Population Dynamics

(1) The Dominican population in the United States has grown at a faster rate than the rest of the population in the country and it has not slowed down in recent years, rising from 1,041,910 in 2000 to 1,537,558 in 2010 and 2,216,258 in 2020, making it the fifth-largest Hispanic/Latino group in the United States, after Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Salvadoreans and Cubans.

(2) The driving force behind Dominican population growth continues to be immigration. Between 2010 and 2020, over 400,000 Dominicans migrated to the United States on a net basis. This is in fact greater than in the previous decade, from 2000 to 2009, when net Dominican immigration to the U.S. equaled 285,577.

(3) Besides substantial immigration, the Dominican population born in the United States has been rising sharply in the last ten years. There were 935,261 Dominicans born in the U.S. residing in the country in 2020, compared to 1,280,997 who were born outside the country. U.S.-born Dominicans now account for 42.2 percent of this population.

(4) The largest concentration of Dominicans continues to be in the state of New York, but there has been a significant spread to other states in the last decade. In 2020, the state of New York was host to an estimated 897,584 Dominicans; followed by New Jersey, with 352,385; Florida, with 270,383; Massachusetts, with 161,787; Pennsylvania with 141,841; Rhode Island with 59,839; and Connecticut with 50,974. There were also a substantial number of Dominican communities growing in North Carolina (38,714), Georgia (31,402), Texas (27,788) and Maryland (26,668). The fastest growth of Dominicans occurred in North Carolina, followed by Pennsylvania, Texas, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, and Georgia.

(5) The spreading of the Dominican population across the U.S. is reflected in the significant movement of Dominicans out of its biggest stronghold in the state of New York. It is estimated that 63,900 Dominicans moved their residence out of New York State on a gross basis during the period of 2017 to 2020. Of these out-migrants, over 70 percent moved to just three different states: New Jersey (30 percent), Pennsylvania (26 percent) and Florida (15 percent).

(6) New York City is by far the most popular location for Dominicans in the United States: about one-third of all Dominicans in the country live in the city. The Dominican population of New York grew from 624,571 in 2010 to 737,143 in 2020. This growth is the highest of any major racial and ethnic group in the city with the exception of the Asian population. The average annual rate of growth of the Dominican population in New York City was 1.8 percent, compared to 0.8 percent for the city overall, and 3.4 percent for the Asian population in the city.

(7) But the supremacy of New York City as a location for Dominicans, although still strong, has diminished substantially over the years. In 1980, as much as 73.4 percent of all Dominicans resided in New York. By 2010, the proportion of Dominicans residing in New York City had declined to 40.6 percent, and in 2019 it was 33.3 percent.

(8) The second largest city of Dominican concentration in the United States in 2020 was Paterson, New Jersey, with an estimated 43,068. This was followed by Boston, Massachusetts (39,993), Providence, Rhode Island (38,818), Lawrence, Massachusetts (34,352), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (33,681), and Yonkers, New York (29,948).

(9) Besides the location in central cities, just mentioned, there exist substantial agglomerations of Dominicans in various metropolitan areas. The biggest of course is the New York City metropolitan area, including parts of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, which had an estimated 1,185,698 Dominicans in 2020. This followed by the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro area in Florida, with 127,011; the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford metro area in Florida, with 67,160; the Providence-Warwick metro area in New Jersey-Massachusetts with 64,524; and the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington metro area in Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Delaware-Maryland, with 61,946.

(10) There are also a number of counties with substantial Dominican populations, including: Essex County in Massachusetts, with an estimated 76,863 in 2020; Passaic County in New Jersey with 74,577; Middlesex County in New Jersey with 47,664; Union County in New Jersey with 23,654; and Berks County in Pennsylvania with 23,342,

(11) Despite the spreading of Dominicans among various locations in the U.S., New York City continues to be the hub of the Dominican population in the U.S., the single place where one out of every three Dominicans in the country resided in 2020. Within the city, the Bronx is the greatest borough of location among Dominicans: with an estimated population of 343,403, almost half (46.6 percent) of all Dominicans in New York City now reside in the Bronx. Manhattan is the second borough of concentration in New York, with 174,214 Dominicans (23.6 percent of the total). This is followed by Queens, with 106,588 Dominicans, and Brooklyn with 104,282. Staten Island has the fewest Dominicans, with 8,656, but the numbers are rapidly growing.

(12) One of the more significant developments in the location of the Dominican population in New York City is the rise of the Bronx. Up to the early 2000s, Manhattan represented the area of greatest concentration of Dominicans within the city and Puerto Ricans constituted the equivalent in the Bronx. But Dominicans overtook Puerto Ricans as the biggest Hispanic/Latino group in this borough during the last decade. The number of Puerto Ricans residing in the Bronx is estimated to have dropped from 316,931 in 2000 to 279,059 in 2020 while the Dominican population rose from 181,450 to 343,403 during the same period. Dominicans now account for 23.3 percent of all the residents of the Bronx while the equivalent for Puerto Ricans is 19.4 percent.

Socioeconomic Status

(1) In 2019, Dominicans had an annual household income per-capita of \$22,551, which was 61 percent of the per-capita income of the average household in the country, equal to \$36,990. The comparatively low income of Dominicans is reflected as well in relatively high poverty rates. Close to one out of every five Dominicans, 19 percent, lived in households with income under the poverty line in 2019. The overall poverty rate in the U.S. was 12.4 percent, and among Hispanics/Latinos in general it was 17.3 percent.

(2) But although the higher poverty rates and shortfall in the income per-capita of Dominicans relative to the overall population are substantial, there has also been a significant progress over time. Consider income per-capita. In 1999, the per-capita income of the Dominican population was 50 percent of the average in the United States, rising to 57 percent in 2009 and to 61 percent in 2019. In fact, Dominicans have had one of the highest average rates of growth of household income per-capita (adjusted for inflation) of any major racial and ethnic group in the United States over the last 20 years, including that of other Hispanic/Latinos.

(3) Poverty rates among Dominicans have also dropped sharply over time. The poverty rate among Dominicans declined from 27.5 percent in 1999 to 25.6 percent in 2009 and then all the way down to 19.0 percent in 2019. By contrast, the overall poverty rate in the country was about the same in 1999 and 2019: 12.4 percent. The precipitous decline in poverty rates among Dominicans is the largest of any of the various racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

(4) There is substantial variability in the socio-economic status of Dominicans among various parts of the United States. New Jersey represents the state with the highest per-capita income, with the average per-capita household income equal to \$23,121, followed closely by Florida, with \$22,974. The states with the lowest income per-capita were Pennsylvania, with \$16,608, and Rhode Island, with \$17,661. This represents tremendous inequality: the average income per-capita of Dominicans in New Jersey is close to 40 percent higher than that of Dominicans in Pennsylvania.

(5) In New York City, the average per-capita income of Dominicans is below the average relative to Dominicans in the country. The mean per-capita income of Dominican New Yorkers in 2019 was \$20,414, compared to \$22,515 in the overall U.S. Dominicans have the lowest per-capita income among all the major racial and ethnic groups in New York City. Compared to the average for New York City, Dominican per-capita income was less than half.

(6) The comparatively low income of Dominican New Yorkers is reflected in relatively high poverty rates as well. Dominicans had the highest poverty rates of all the major racial and ethnic groups in the city in 2019, equal to about 22 percent, although it was about the same as that for Hispanics/Latinos in general, whose poverty rate was slightly over 21 percent. The overall poverty rate in the city was 16 percent in 2019.

(7) Although the socioeconomic status of Dominican New Yorkers in 2019 was lower compared to others in the city, the situation has improved substantially over the last two decades. Indeed, Dominicans displayed both a considerable increase in income and a remarkable decrease in poverty, more than any other major racial/ethnic group in New York City. The per-capita income of Dominican New Yorkers grew substantially between 2010 and 2019, from \$15,362 to \$20,414 (adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2019 dollars), which constitutes a 3.2 percent average increase per year during the decade. This is almost double New York City's overall average income per-capita growth per year, which was 1.7 percent and it was also greater than the overall income per-capita growth among Hispanics/Latinos in general during the decade.

(8) Just as it does at the national level, the sustained growth of income per-capita among Dominicans in New York City over time reflects itself in a remarkable drop of poverty rates. Dominicans had an average poverty rate of 32.8 percent in 1999, which drops to 22 percent in 2019. This is the biggest drop of poverty rates among all the major racial and ethnic groups in New York City. Overall, in the city, poverty rates dropped as well, but not as much: from 21.3 in 1999 to 16 percent in 2019. The poverty rate dropped as well for other Hispanics/Latinos in the city, but less than for Dominicans.

The Impact of Demographic Factors on Socioeconomic Status

(1) One possible set of explanations for the comparatively high poverty rates among Dominicans is demographic. The age structure of a population, for instance, makes a significant difference in terms of income: except for the very old, as individuals age, they generally have higher income. Dominicans tend to be younger on average than the rest of the U.S. population. The overall Dominican population in the U.S. had a median age of about 32 years in 2020, and it was somewhat higher for New York City Dominicans, who had a median age of 35 years in 2020. This is substantially lower than the median age in the United States, which was equal to 43 years in 2020, as well as in New York City, where the median age was 39 years. It was about the same as for the overall Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S., whose median age was 31 years in 2020, but lower than that for this group in New York City, which was 36 years.

(2) At the same time, the Dominican population in the U.S. is getting older. The median age of Dominicans in the country rose from 28 years in 2000 to 32 years in 2020. And in New York City, the increase has been from 28 years to 35 years. This aging of Dominicans corresponds –but is not as deep as—the aging of the American population in general: the median age of the population in the U.S. jumped from 35 years in 2000 to 43 years in 2020.

(3) Poverty rates among Dominicans vary by age: they are particularly high at the extremes of the age distribution: older persons and children. Among older Dominicans (over 64 years of age), about one third—32.6 percent—lived in households that were poor, which is more than triple the poverty rate for the overall population of older Americans, which was 9.5 percent in 2019, and substantially higher than that among the Hispanic/Latino population overall, whose poverty for this population group was 17.5 percent. The poverty rate among Dominican children in 2019 was also comparatively high. Almost one-quarter—23.3 percent—of Dominican children lived in poor households in 2019. For the American population in general, the poverty rate among children was 17.1 percent; Dominican children had therefore close to a 40 percent higher poverty rate. Among Hispanics/Latinos in general, the poverty rate was 23.7 percent in 2019.

(4) Despite the comparatively high rates of child poverty prevailing in the Dominican population, there has been substantial progress over the last ten years. The poverty rate among Dominican children dropped from 33.3 percent in 2009 to 23.3 percent in 2019, a drop of ten percentage points. Among the American population overall, the drop in child poverty was from 20.4 percent to 17.1 percent, a decline of about 3 percentage points and among Hispanics/Latinos it declined by about 7 percentage points.

(5) Child poverty varies by family structure. Because of the substantially lower income received by women in the labor market, families with children or other family members headed by separated or divorced women, as well as single women with children, tend to have lower income and higher poverty than married couple families. As a result, the percentage of poor children residing in female-headed families is much higher. For instance, 13 percent of Hispanic children living in married-couple families in 2019 were poor, while the equivalent figure for Hispanic children in female-headed households was 41 percent.

(6) Among Dominicans in the United States, 28.4 percent lived in female-headed households in 2019. The proportion was even higher for Dominican New Yorkers, for whom 35.4 percent lived in this type of household. These figures are substantially higher than those for the overall population and among other Hispanic/Latino groups. In 2019, the proportion of female-headed households among the overall population was 13.9 percent and among Hispanics/Latinos in general it was 17.7 percent. It was higher only among Black/African Americans, for which 30.8 percent lived in female-headed households.

(7) A third demographic factor that relates to the socioeconomic status of Dominicans is the substantial proportion of its population that consists of immigrants, particularly recent immigrants. Recent immigrants tend to have lower income because their adjustment to the U.S. labor market takes time. For example, in 2020, Dominican immigrants who moved to the U.S. between 2010 and 2020 had average annual earnings of \$25,622, while those who had moved to the country in the earlier period of 2000-2009, had substantially higher wages, equal to \$38,354 on average.

Labor Market Outcomes of Dominicans in the United States

(1) For both men and women, the labor force participation rates among Dominicans are significantly above those in the overall population. The proportion of Dominican men participating in the labor force (employed or unemployed) was 74.4 percent, well above the overall participation rate in the nation of 68.6 percent. Among Dominican women, 64.7 percent were participating in the labor market in 2019, compared to 58.8 percent among the overall population. In fact, Dominican women have the highest female labor force participation rate in the country, compared to other major racial and ethnic groups, and men also have the highest, except for the overall Hispanic/Latino male population, which has a slightly higher participation rate.

(2) The comparatively high labor force participation rates of Dominicans represent a major change relative to the past and helps explain in part the growing per-capita income and reduced poverty of this population reported earlier. The average participation rate of Dominican men in the workforce rose from 64 percent in

2000 to 74.4 percent in 2019. Among Dominican women, the increase was from 53.1 percent in 2000 to 64.7 percent in 2019. Note that the overall male labor force participation rate in the U.S. dropped from 72.7 percent in 2000 to 68.6 percent in 2019. Among women, the overall labor force participation rate remained unchanged, equal to 58.9 percent in 2000 and 58.8 percent in 2019.

(3) In 2019 Dominicans had an unemployment rate that was somewhat higher than the overall population. The unemployment rate among Dominicans in the country was 6.5 percent, compared to 4.5 percent for the overall population and 5.1 percent among Hispanics/Latinos in general. The same pattern holds for New York City, where Dominican unemployment was 8.6 percent in 2019, compared to 5.3 percent for the overall population of New Yorkers and 6.6 percent among Hispanics/Latinos overall.

(4) What explains the higher unemployment rate of Dominican workers? Location matters. For the period of 2018-2019, New York City and New York State –where Dominicans concentrate-- had relatively high unemployment rates; among Dominicans, the unemployment rates in New York City and New York State were equal to 8.6 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively. But Dominicans in Florida and New Jersey had much lower unemployment rates, equal to 4.9 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively.

(5) Education is another major force affecting unemployment. Dominicans with less than a high school education had an average unemployment rate of 11.5 percent, compared to an 8.8 percent unemployment rate among those who had completed a high school diploma, 7.0 percent for those with some college education (but less than a college degree), and 4.6 percent for college graduates.

(6) Age has a major influence on unemployment rates. Dominicans aged 16 to 19 years had a whopping 24.5 percent unemployment rate, compared to an unemployment rate of 8.4 percent among the 20 to 29 population, 5.1 percent for the 30 to 39 age group, 4.1 percent for those aged 40 to 49, and 5 percent for persons 50 and over. The unemployment rate among Dominican youth (16 to 19 years of age) was even higher in New York City, equal to 38 percent in 2019.

(7) The industrial distribution of Dominican workers in the U.S. does not differ substantially from that of the overall population. The two sectors where Dominicans cluster, as determined for 2019, are the service sector (44.9 percent of all workers) and the wholesale and retail trade sector (23.2 percent), which are also the top employment industries for the overall population (equal to 42.2 and 20.7 percent, respectively). The third most important industry of employment among Dominicans is the transport, communications, and public utilities sector (with 10.2 percent of the total). On the other hand, Dominicans are seriously underrepresented in public administration: only 2.4 percent of all Dominican workers are employed in this sector, less than half the equivalent for the overall U.S., which has 4.5 percent of its labor force in public administration.

(8) In terms of occupations, Dominicans are over-represented in service occupations, which accounted for 32.9 percent of Dominican workers in 2019. By comparison, the equivalent proportion among the overall U.S. was 18.5 percent. Dominicans were also over-represented in the precision production, craft, and repair service occupations, with 21.7 percent of Dominicans employed in this sector while 14.1 percent of the overall U.S. labor force had those occupations. On the other hand, Dominicans were sharply under-represented among management and professional, occupations, which accounted for 21.9 percent of all Dominicans in the labor force, as compared to 38.1 percent in the U.S. population overall.

(9) There are substantial differences in the occupational distributions of men and women. Service occupations are the most abundant among Dominican women, with 42 percent of all female workers employed in this sector in 2019. This sharply exceeds the equivalent proportion among U.S. women in general, which had 23.9 percent of their workers employed in service occupations in 2019. Among men, the dominant set of occupations were operators, fabricators and laborers, accounting for 30.7 percent of all Dominican men in the labor force. The equivalent proportion for the overall U.S. male population was much lower, equal to 12.3 percent.

(10) Just as in the overall U.S. population, Dominican New Yorkers—both men and women—are drastically under-represented in the management and professional occupations. For Dominican women, 22.6 percent held these occupations, which is less than half of the equivalent for the overall New York City female population, which had 50.6 percent of its workforce in these occupations. Among men, Dominican New Yorkers had 15.7 percent of their workforce in the management and professional occupations, which is again less than half the equivalent among New York men in general, which had 37.3 percent of their labor force in this sector.

(11) Most workers in the U.S. are employed full-time but there are substantial gender-based differences. For Dominican women, 57.3 percent were employed full-time in 2019 versus 71.1 percent among men. But these proportions have risen sharply over time. For Dominican women, 42.6 percent were employed full-time in 1999 but by 2009 this had risen to 57.3 percent while the proportion of men employed full-time also rose, from 56.3 percent in 1999 to 71.1 percent in 2019. As can be expected because of their lower work hours, the average earnings of part-time workers are substantially lower than those of full-time employees. Part-time Dominican workers, for example, earn an average of \$12,932 per year while full time workers earn an average of \$46,326.

(12) Focusing on year-round, full-time workers, the average annual earnings of Dominicans were among the lowest of all the racial and ethnic groups examined. For Dominican men, annual earnings in 2019 were on average equal to \$50,804, substantially below those of the overall male worker population, whose average earnings were \$72,390 in 2019. Among Dominican women, annual earnings were equal to \$40,980 in 2019, also significantly lower than those for the overall female workforce, which were equal to \$55,060. As with all groups in the population, Dominican women working full-time year-round had on average lower earnings than men, equal to about 80 percent of their male counterparts, even though, as will be shown later, women in general—both Dominican and the overall population--tend to have higher educational attainment than men.

(13) The shortfall in the earnings of Dominican workers is magnified in New York City. The average earnings of year-round full-time Dominican men in the city were equal to \$44,960 in 2018-2019 and among women they were equal to \$38,657, compared to those of the overall workforce in the city, which had earnings equal to \$87,640 for men and \$72,669 for women. This means that both male and female Dominican workers made just slightly over half of the yearly earnings of the overall population in New York City. This is a much greater wedge when compared to the overall U.S. earnings gap.

(14) Despite the relatively lower earnings of Dominican workers, the situation has improved with respect to the past. The average earnings of year-round, full-time Dominican workers rose from \$38,685 in 1999 to \$40,976 in 2009 and then to \$46,325 in 2019, where the 1999 and 2009 figures have been adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2019 dollars. This growth in income was greater than the average for the U.S. population.

(15) Age is one of the forces affecting earnings. For instance, the average annual earnings of full-time, year-round Dominican workers in 2019 increases from \$21,396 for persons aged 16 to 19 to \$44,518 for the 25 to 34 age cohort. The highest average earnings among Dominicans are reached at the 35 to 44 age group, with \$51,660, and it falls for older age groups.

(16) Educational attainment is critical in explaining earnings. Among Dominicans working full-time year-round in 2019, annual earnings rise from an average of \$35,550 for those with less than a high school education, to \$37,381 for persons with a high school diploma, \$42,713 for those with some college, and \$65,771 for college graduates.

The Educational Attainment of the Dominican Population

(1) The educational attainment of the Dominican population is lower than for the overall population in the U.S. For instance, the proportion of Dominicans 25 years of age or older who had not completed a high school education in 2019 was 22.6 percent, compared to 9.6 percent in the overall population. At the other extreme, persons with a college degree (or more) accounted for 19.6 percent of the Dominican population, relative to 33.2 percent in the overall U.S.

(2) But the educational attainment of Dominicans now surpasses that of the overall Hispanic/Latino population. For example, in 2019, the percentage of Dominicans who had completed some college (but not a college degree) was 20.7 percent of the total population aged 25 year of age or older, and those who had a college degree were 19.6 percent, adding up to 40.3 percent who had some college education or more. Among Hispanics/Latinos in general, the equivalent proportions were 19.6 percent, 17.6 percent, and 37.2 percent.

(3) There are substantial differences in the educational attainment of Dominicans by gender, with women having greater schooling than men. For instance, in 2019, a total of 21.2 percent of Dominican women had a college degree and an additional 21.6 percent had completed some college education (without receiving a degree), totaling 41.8 percent. By comparison, 17.6 percent of Dominican men had a college degree and 19.4 percent had completed some college, adding up to 37 percent.

(4) Although the overall average educational attainment of Dominicans is significantly below that of the overall U.S. population, this masks an essential distinction: U.S.-born Dominicans have substantially higher levels of schooling than foreign-born Dominicans. This makes a big difference because immigrants account for almost 60 percent of Dominicans in the country.

(5) In fact, U.S.-born Dominicans now surpass the overall U.S. population in educational attainment. For women, as much as 34.6 percent of U.S.-born Dominicans in 2019 had a college degree and 31.6 percent had completed some college education (but not a college degree), which adds up to 66.2 percent who had some college education or more. For the overall female population in the U.S., the equivalent proportions are 32.5 percent for college graduates and 23.5 for those with some college, which add up to 56 percent, significantly below the proportions for Dominican women. For U.S.-born Dominican men, 23 percent had a college degree and 29.2 percent had completed some college education (but not a college degree), adding up to 52.2 percent with some college education or more. This is approximately the same as for the U.S. male population overall, which had 31.4 percent with a college degree and 21.8 percent with some college education (but not completed a college degree), which sums to 53.2 percent with some college education or more.

(6) U.S.-born Dominicans also have significantly greater educational attainment than U.S.-born Hispanics in general. Among the latter, in 2019, 25.5 percent of men had completed some college and 18.3 percent had a college degree, summing to 43.8 percent with some college or more, compared to 52.2 percent among U.S.-born Dominican men. For Hispanic women, the proportion who had completed some college was 28.1 percent and those with a college degree was 22.4 percent, adding to 50.5 percent, compared to 66.2 percent for Dominican women. This result applies as well for the major Hispanic sub-groups, including Mexican Americans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Salvadoreans. U.S.-born Dominican educational attainment is only exceeded by that of the Cuban population.

(7) The situation is quite different for foreign-born Dominicans. For this population, 16.5 percent of women in 2019 had a college degree and 19.7 percent had some college education (but not a degree), which adds up to 36.2 percent with some college education, sharply below the 66.2 percent for U.S.-born Dominican women. The same gap exists among Dominican men. For the latter, 14.7 percent of the foreign-born population had completed college and 17.8 percent had completed some college, summing to 32.5 percent, way below the 53.2 percent for U.S.-born Dominican men.

(8) The enrollment rates of Dominican youth exceed those of the overall population in the country. For the age group aged 15 to 17, as much as 97 percent of Dominican men and 97.6 percent of Dominican women were enrolled in school on average during the period of 2015-2019. This is slightly higher than the equivalent proportions for the overall U.S. population, which had enrollment rates of 96.6 percent for men and 97 percent for women. In the 18 to 21 age range, Dominican enrollment rates again surpass the overall U.S. population. Among Dominican women aged 18 to 21, as much as 71.1 percent were enrolled on average in school or universities in the period of 2015-2019 while the equivalent for the overall U.S. population was 69.6 percent. For men, Dominicans aged 18 to 21 had an enrollment rate of 61.8 percent while U.S. men overall in that age range had a 61.2 percent enrollment rate.

(9) The enrollment rates of Dominicans widely exceed those prevailing among the overall Hispanic population. For instance, for U.S.-born Dominican women aged 18 to 21, as much as 72.4 percent in the period 2015 to 2019 were enrolled in a school or university while the equivalent for Hispanic women in general was 65.2 percent. For U.S.-born Dominican men aged 18 to 21, the enrollment rate in schools or universities was 63.1 percent, substantially higher than for U.S.-born Hispanic men in the same age range, which was 55 percent. Indeed, Dominican enrollment rates exceed significantly those of the other major Hispanic groups --such as Mexican Americans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Salvadoreans—with the exception of Cuban youth.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

(1) The above conclusions focus on the period before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in January and February of 2020. The pandemic did have a devastating short-run impact on the unemployment of both Dominicans and the overall population of the country. For Dominicans, from an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent overall in 2019, unemployment rose to 7.3 percent on average for the months of February and March 2020 and then suddenly climbed to a whopping 30 percent in April and May of 2020. The overall unemployment rate in the U.S. also rose sharply, although not as much as for Dominicans, tripling from an average of 4.5 percent in 2019 to 13.8 percent in April and May of 2020. Since then, unemployment rates have gradually declined. For Dominicans, the unemployment rate dropped from 20.8 percent in June and July of 2020 to 6.9 percent in October and November of 2021, while for the country overall the reduction was from 10.8 percent in June and July of 2020 to 4.2 percent in October and November of 2021. Note that this has not been a continuous reduction, as the various waves of the pandemic did raise unemployment rates back up at various times during this period.

(2) The effects of the pandemic on other variables, such as the per-capita income and poverty of Dominicans and the overall U.S. population are more difficult to assess at this point due to the difficulties of data collection in the past two years. However, exploratory analysis of the existing data suggests that the pandemic may not have had the sustained negative impact that many expected based on its cataclysmic effects in March through August of 2020. In fact, some research suggests that poverty may have even declined in late 2020 and 2021 when compared to its levels before the pandemic. These results could be explained in part by the resilience of the U.S. economy during the pandemic and the relatively quick rebound of employment. But more important was perhaps the effect of the massive expansion of government programs and tax breaks that helped individuals and families with low income navigate the pandemic.

Conclusions

This report presents a mixed, but overall promising picture of the Dominican population of the United States. On the one hand, Dominicans have among the lowest per-capita income and highest poverty rates in the country. On the other hand, many Dominican income and employment indicators have improved substantially over the last two decades. Poverty, for instance, has dropped sharply, more than for any other major racial and ethnic group in the population. Household income per-capita has also increased, as have labor market earnings. And Dominican labor force participation rates, for both men and women, are among the highest in the nation, a sharp reversal from previous decades.

Even more significantly, the Dominican second and third generations appear to be investing heavily in the accumulation of human capital. Their educational attainment has been continuously rising. In fact, U.S.-born Dominicans now equal or surpass the overall U.S. population in educational attainment and enrollment rates.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating short-run impact on Dominicans and the overall population in the country. But the strength of the American economy, the strong spirit of its people, and the dramatic steps taken by the government in stimulating the economy and assisting the poor have sharply ameliorated its impact.

Despite considerable challenges in the last 15 years, including a great recession and a devastating pandemic, Dominicans have displayed enormous resiliency and made substantial socioeconomic progress. The overall prospects for the future appear to us to be cautiously bright for Dominicans in the U.S.

INTRODUCTION

There are over two million Dominicans currently residing in the United States. They constitute the fifth largest Hispanic/Latino group in the country and the biggest in New York City. Spreading widely, from the state of Pennsylvania to that of Georgia, and from the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts to Tampa, Florida, substantial communities have emerged over time. This research report provides a comprehensive analysis of the current social and economic condition of Dominicans in the United States. It includes a discussion of residential location and population dynamics, the resurgence of immigration, the current income and poverty status, labor market indicators, educational progress, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, among other topics.

Despite the growing numbers and visibility of Dominicans in the United States, there is currently no single up-to-date study putting together a comprehensive analysis of the current situation of this population. There exist studies that include some information for specific segments of the Dominican community,¹ for specific years or periods of time,² and about specific issues.³ There are also other extensive, but not recent, surveys of Dominicans in the country.⁴

Providing a comprehensive study of the socioeconomic status of the Dominican population of the United States at this juncture in time is essential. Firstly, the last fifteen years have seen enormous social and economic turmoil, as represented by the financial and economic crisis of 2008-2010 and its aftermath, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, accounts of the situation of Dominicans have often focused on New York City. In the past, this has been a natural outcome of the overwhelming concentration of Dominicans in the city. In 2000, for example, about half of all Dominicans in the U.S. resided in New York. But this has changed. Although still the greatest single concentration of Dominicans in the U.S., the Dominican population in New York accounted for only about one third of the total population in the country in 2020.

The increased complexity of the Dominican experience in the United States is not only geographical, but also generational. In the past, studies of Dominicans focused almost exclusively on analyzing immigrants. This reflected the predominance of those born in the Dominican Republic within the community. But this has also changed. A rapidly growing second generation is becoming a major force. In 2000, only 33 percent of all Dominicans were born in the United States but by 2020, this had increased to 42 percent. At the same time, it must be recognized that Dominican immigration to the United States, which had slowed down in the decade of the 2000s, resurged in the 2010s and has provided an additional level of complexity to the Dominican experience.

What do these events imply about the socioeconomic situation of the Dominican population in the United States? How did the financial crisis and its aftermath in the early 2010s affect Dominicans? What has been the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic? Is the growing second-generation improving its educational attainment compared to their parents?

1 Such as Granberry and Valentino (2021) for Boston, MA; Hernández and Rivera-Batiz (1997), and Hernández, Rivera-Batiz and Agodini (1995) for New York City; Bergad (2021) for the New York City Metropolitan Region, Decena (2011) for New Jersey; Oropesa and Jensen (2010) and Jensen et. al. (2006) for Reading, PA; and Waldinger (1986), Pessar (1987), Portes and Guarnizo (1991), and Duany (1994) for the Washington Heights community in New York City. See also the studies by Babich and Batalova (2021), Hernandez (2002), and Hendricks, G. (1974) on Dominican immigrants.

2 See the research pieces published by the Pew Research Center, such as Noe-Bustamante, Flores and Shah (2017) and Lopez (2015).

3 Such as research on housing and residential segregation issues, as authored by Hernandez, R, Sezgin, U., and Marrara (2018), and Hernandez, R., Kucheveva, Y., Marrar, S. and Sezgin, U. (2018).

4 Hernández and Rivera-Batiz (2003), and Torres-Saillant and Hernandez (1998).

This research report utilizes data collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Information for 2000 was obtained from the decennial U.S. Census of Population, which counts and collects information on all U.S. residents every ten years. The 5 percent Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) of the 2000 Census were utilized. In 2001, however, the U.S. Bureau of the Census decided to replace the decennial Census PUMS with data provided by another source: the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an annual household survey of the U.S. population and reproduces the format followed by the decennial Census of Population. Detailed data on geography, demography and socioeconomic status is available from the ACS and the corresponding one percent PUMS for the years of 2001 through 2020.⁵ In addition to these sources, the research used the 2018 to 2021 Current Population Surveys (CPS) to examine unemployment changes after the COVID-19 pandemic started. The CPS is a household survey that is carried monthly with the main goal of collecting information relating to the labor market status of the U.S. population. These data sets are supplemented with the 2020 U.S. Census of Population and other sources in providing a comprehensive discussion of the geographical dispersion, demographics, labor market outcomes, poverty, and income situation of Dominicans in the dawn of the 2020s.⁶

5 The ACS data utilized in this report for 2001 to 2020 were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) produced by the University of Minnesota [see Ruggles et. al. (2021)]. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the data collection process, the 2020 ACS has been released using an experimental method to weight its sample, to make it representative of the whole population. As recommended by the Bureau of the Census, this study did not utilize the results of the 2020 ACS except when in combination with other data sources.

6 It should be emphasized that insofar as the surveys just mentioned are samples of the population, the results provided in this research report are estimates and are subject to sampling, measurement, and other sources of error [for more details see U.S. Census Bureau (2020)].

GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE DOMINICAN POPULATION IN THE U.S.

How many Dominicans are there in the U.S.? As with other ethnic groups, the number of Dominicans in the country is an estimate, based on the survey instruments used to collect demographic information in the nation. Both the U.S. Census of Population and the American Community Survey (ACS), which are the main sources of demographic and socioeconomic information in the U.S., include a separate question intended to allow individuals to self-identify as being Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin. As part of this question, persons can check a box with the following choices: (1) Mexican, Mexican American and Chicano; (2) Puerto Rican; (3) Cuban; and (4) another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin. These choices do not include Dominicans explicitly. However, the “another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin” box does have a blank space where persons can write-in the specific Hispanic group that they form part of, if they do choose the “Other Hispanic” category. To illustrate this, the questionnaire includes several examples of Hispanic groups that could be used to write into their forms: Salvadorean, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, and Ecuadorean.

Because this Hispanic/Latino identification question in the ACS makes it more complicated for individuals to choose “Dominican”, which they would have to write-in instead of just checking a box with their identity (as it is with Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans), researchers seeking to make sure there is no undercount of Dominicans in the ACS and other Census-based publications have adopted the following criteria that define whether the person should be counted as Dominican:⁷ (1) the person self-identified as Dominican by writing-in this group on the ACS questionnaire; (2) selected “other” under the Hispanic origin question and also indicated their birthplace was the Dominican Republic; (3) selected “other” under the Hispanic origin question and also indicated their first ancestry to be Dominican; (4) selected “other” under the Hispanic origin question and also indicated their second ancestry to be Dominican.⁸

7 This methodology was originally proposed by Cresce and Ramirez (2003).

8 The percentage of Dominicans who do not write-in their self-identification as Dominican has been very low in the ACS surveys. For instance, in 2019 it was only 2.6 percent of the total.

Based on our estimates, the Dominican population residing in the United States was equal to 2,216,258 in 2020, rising from 1,537,558 in 2010 and double what it was in 2000, when the number was 1,041,910. In fact, as Table 1 shows, the growth of the Dominican population has not slowed down in recent years. The annual average annual rate of growth of Dominicans in the period of 2000 to 2020 was 4.4 percent, just slightly lower than the equivalent for the 2000-2010 period, when it was 4.8 percent.

Table 1
Dominican Population Growth in the U.S. Has Not Slowed Down, 2000-2020

A

Year	Dominican Population in the U.S.
2000	1,041,910
2010	1,537,558
2020	2,216,258

B

Time Period	Change in Population	Average Annual Rate of Growth
2000 to 2010	495,648	4.8%
2010 to 2020	678,700	4.4%

Source: Data for 2000 is from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population 5% PUMS; data for 2010 is from the American Community Survey PUMS; data for 2020 is an estimate based on trends from the 2016-2020 American Community Surveys PUMS plus the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

As Table 2 depicts, Dominicans follow Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Salvadoreans, and Cubans as the fifth largest Hispanic group in the nation. However, one can forecast that the Dominican population may in the next decade overtake both Cubans and Salvadoreans, making it the third largest Hispanic group in the nation. The reason is that the growth rate of Dominicans in recent years has sharply exceeded that of both the Cuban and Salvadorean groups. For instance, between 2010 and 2020, the average rate of growth of the Dominican population was 4.4 percent, but it was 2.9 percent for Cubans and 3.3 percent for Salvadoreans.

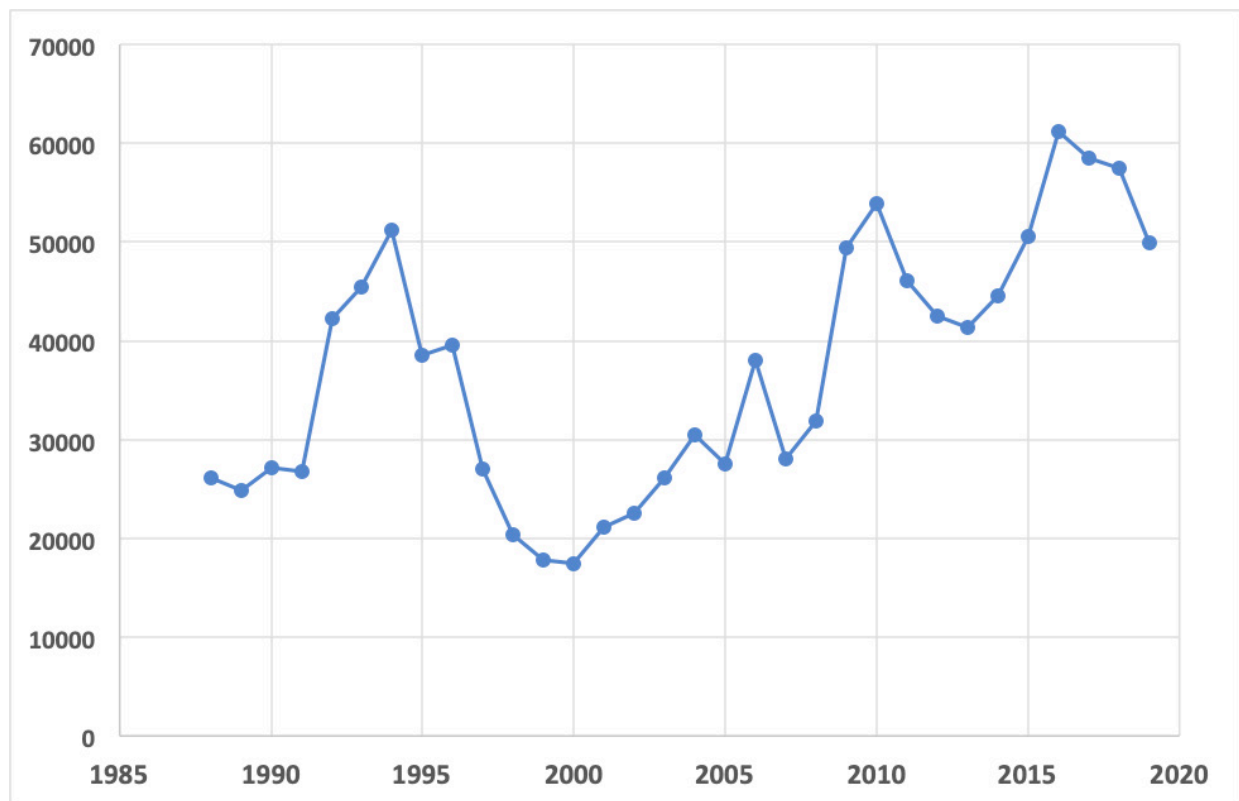
Table 2
The Largest Hispanic Populations in the U.S., 2000-2020

Hispanic Group	2000	2010	2020
Mexican	20,900,102	32,915,983	38,427,547
Puerto Rican	3,403,510	4,682,531	5,974,170
Salvadorean	997,862	1,867,104	2,470,786
Cuban	1,249,820	1,883,599	2,439,745
Dominican	1,041,910	1,537,558	2,216,258
Colombian	655,090	993,345	1,322,305

Source: Data for 2000 is from the US Census of Population 5% PUMS; data for 2010 is from the American Community Survey PUMS for 2010; data for 2020 is an estimate based on the 2017-2019 American Community Surveys PUMS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population, authors' tabulations. Note that the populations for Colombians, Dominicans and Salvadoreans include both persons who self-identify in the specific group plus those who do not self-identify but who consider themselves Hispanics born in the country or with ancestry in the country.

In absolute numbers, the major source of the rapid Dominican population growth in the United States in recent years has been immigration. For a while, back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Dominican immigrants admitted for permanent residence in the U.S. had dropped sharply. But this has been reversed ever since. The strong resurgence of immigration is shown in Figure 1, which presents the number of Dominicans admitted as permanent legal residents in the U.S. from fiscal years 1988 to 2019. As can be seen, in the period from 1997 to 2007, the number of Dominicans admitted yearly as permanent residents hovered below 30,000, but it has taken off since then, peaking at over 60,000 in 2016.

Figure 1
Dominicans Obtaining Lawful Permanent Resident Status, 1988-2019



Source: Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, various years.

When discussing the topic of immigration, the issue of undocumented migration always emerges. The data utilized in this study includes all immigrants, as the U.S. Census of Population, the ACS, and other surveys do not ask questions regarding legal immigration status and are entrusted to sample all persons in the U.S., including both documented and undocumented immigrants. But it is for this same reason that one cannot explicitly identify the number of undocumented immigrants using these surveys. However, demographers have for a long time utilized the so-called residual method to provide estimates of undocumented immigration. They calculate the number of undocumented immigrants from any country residing in the U.S. as the difference between the total number of immigrants from that country counted in the U.S. by the ACS or other Census data and the number of documented immigrants who have been admitted legally into the U.S., as determined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Based on this methodology, the two most recent studies providing estimates of the undocumented population in the U.S. have been carried out by the Pew Research Center [see Passel and Cohn (2019)] and the Migration Policy Institute [see Babich and Batalova (2021)]. The first one estimates that the number of undocumented immigrants born in the Dominican Republic rose from 200,000 in 2007 to 240,000 in 2017. The Migration Policy Institute study estimates the number of Dominican undocumented workers to be 164,000 in 2019, with 73,000 of those residing in New York State, 28,000 in New Jersey, 13,000 in Massachusetts and 10,000 in Pennsylvania. They also estimate that there are 12,000 Dominican youth and young persons eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, although only 1,900 Dominicans currently have a DACA status.

The result of the resurging Dominican migration to the U.S. in the last decade is the fact that, of all Dominican immigrants residing in the U.S. in 2020 --which was equal to 1,280,994—as much as 32 percent (almost one-third) moved to the country in the previous decade, between 2000 and 2020 (a total of 408,117) while 22 percent moved between 2000 and 2009 (285,577). As Table 3 shows, the remaining immigrants (46 percent of them) moved to the U.S. before 2000.

Table 3
Dominican Immigrants in the United States, by Year of Arrival, 2020

Year of Arrival in the US	Population	% of Immigrant Population
Total Immigrants	1,280,997	100.0%
Arrived 2010-2020	408,117	31.9
Arrived 2000-2009	285,577	22.3
Arrived Before 2000	587,283	45.8

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2020 U.S. Census, authors' tabulations.

At the same time, the number of Dominicans born in the U.S. is also rising sharply. As Table 4 shows, of the 2,216,258 Dominicans residing in the U.S. in 2020, a total of 935,261 were born in the United States, which constitutes about 42 percent of the total Dominican population. Back in 2000, U.S.-born Dominicans constituted only 33.2 percent of all Dominicans in the U.S. The rise of U.S.-born Dominicans, that is, the growth of the second and third generations, is clearly one of the priorities in the agenda of research for both academic researchers and policymakers. Later sections will provide a demographic profile of U.S.-born Dominicans and –given their young median age– their educational prospects.

Table 4
Immigrants versus U.S. Born Dominicans, 2000-2020

Period	Dominican Population			U.S. Born as a % of Total
	Overall	Immigrants	U.S.-Born	
2020	2,216,258	1,280,997	935,261	42.2%
2010	1,537,558	922,873	614,685	40.0%
2000	1,041,910	695,996	345,914	33.2%

Source: Data for 2000 is from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS); data for 2010 is from the American Community Survey PUMS; data for 2020 is based on the 2019 ACS and the 2020 U.S. Census; authors' tabulations.

The largest concentration of Dominicans continues to be the state of New York, but the latest data shows a significant spread into other states. Indeed, the proportion of Dominicans residing in New York State has dropped sharply from close to 60 percent of all Dominicans in 2000 to approximately 40 percent in 2020.

Table 5 presents the states with the largest Dominican population in 2020. The top five states were New York, with 897,584, followed by New Jersey, with 352,385, Florida (270,313), Massachusetts (161,787) and Pennsylvania (141,481).

Table 5
Geographical Distribution of Dominicans, Top States, 2000-2020

State	2000 Number	% of Total	2010 Number	% of Total	2020 Number	% of Total
Total	1,041,910	100.0%	1,537,558	100.0%	2,216,258	100.0%
New York	617,901	59.3	736,096	47.9	897,584	40.5
New Jersey	136,529	13.1	211,083	13.7	352,385	15.9
Florida	98,410	9.4	182,022	11.8	270,383	12.2
Massachusetts	69,502	6.7	123,406	8.0	161,787	7.3
Pennsylvania	13,667	1.3	63,396	4.1	141,841	6.4
Rhode Island	24,588	2.4	46,810	3.0	59,839	2.7
Connecticut	12,830	1.2	26,653	1.7	50,974	2.3
North Carolina	4,821	0.5	12,942	0.8	38,714	1.7
Georgia	4,685	0.4	20,484	1.3	31,402	1.4
Texas	7,030	0.7	13,262	0.9	27,788	1.3
Maryland	7,312	0.7	15,324	1.0	26,668*	1.2
Other States	68,483	4.3	86,080	5.8	156,893	7.1

* The data for Maryland represents an average for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population, PUMS, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples for 2010 and 2019, and 2010 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

The growing geographical dispersal of Dominicans is demonstrated by the fast growth of a number of states that were not the traditional locations of Dominicans in the past. Table 6 shows that the fastest-growing state for Dominicans in the period of 2010 to 2020 was North Carolina, with an average rate of growth of 20 percent per year. In 2020, the Dominican population in North Carolina was, according to our estimates, equal to 38,714. This was followed by Pennsylvania, with an average annual growth of 12.4 percent a year between 2010 and 2020. Other fast-growing states were Texas (10.9 percent growth per year), Connecticut (9.1 percent), Maryland (7.4 percent per year) and Georgia (5.2 percent). These states grew much faster than other states where Dominicans concentrated in previous decades, such as New York, Florida, and Massachusetts; only New Jersey continued its accelerated population growth for Dominicans, with an average annual growth of 6.7 percent in the period of 2010 to 2020.

Table 6
States with the Fastest Growing Dominican Populations
2010-2020*

State	Population in 2010	Population in 2020	Average Rate of Growth (Annual, per year)
Total	1,537,558	2,216,258	4.4%
North Carolina	12,942	38,714	19.9
Pennsylvania	63,396	141,841	12.4
Texas	13,262	27,788	10.9
Connecticut	26,653	50,974	9.1
Maryland	15,324	26,668*	7.4
New Jersey	211,083	352,385	6.7
Georgia	20,484	31,402	5.3
Florida	182,022	270,383	4.9
Massachusetts	123,406	161,787	3.1
Rhode Island	46,810	59,839	2.8
New York	736,096	897,584	2.2

* Includes only the top eleven most populous states for Dominicans in 2020.

* The data for Maryland represents an average for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population, PUMS, and American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples for 2010, 2018, 2019 and 2020, and 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

The spreading of the Dominican population across the U.S. is reflected in the significant movement of Dominicans out of its biggest stronghold in New York State. It is estimated that 63,900 Dominicans moved their residence out of New York State on a gross basis during the period of 2017 to 2020. Of these out-migrants, over 70 percent moved to just three different states: New Jersey (30 percent), Pennsylvania (26 percent), and Florida (15 percent).

Table 7 shows the top cities of Dominican concentration in 2020. New York City continues to be the top location, with 737,143 Dominicans residing in the Big Apple. This is followed by the city of Paterson in New Jersey, which houses 43,068 Dominicans, Boston in Massachusetts, where 39,993 Dominicans reside, Providence, with 38,818, and Lawrence, Massachusetts with 34,352. Other cities with major concentrations include Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Yonkers (New York), Newark (New Jersey), Jersey City (New Jersey), Allentown (Pennsylvania), and Miami (Florida).

Table 7
Top Cities of Dominican Concentration, 2000-2020

City	2020 Population	2010 Population	2000 Population
New York City, NY	737,143	624,571	554,638
Paterson, NJ	43,068	29,363	19,977
Boston, MA	39,993	30,284	19,061
Providence, RI	38,818	31,563	19,915
Lawrence, MA	34,352*	28,970*	22,111
Philadelphia, PA	33,681	15,908	6,041
Yonkers, NY	29,948	17,973	10,223
Newark, NJ	22,030	12,783	7,578
Jersey City, NJ	21,837	13,341	12,598
Allentown, PA	19,935	9,250	2,704
Passaic City, NJ	18,143*	16,651*	12,481
Elizabeth, NJ	12,383	10,383	5,050
Miami, FL	12,208	12,282	9,473

Source: For all cities, the 2000 figures are from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population, PUMS. The 2010 estimate for New York City is from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS), and the 2020 estimate is based on the 2019 ACS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population. For other cities, due to smaller sample sizes, the population estimates for 2010 are an average obtained from the 2009 to 2012 ACS; the estimates for 2020 are based on the ACS estimates for 2017, 2018 and 2019, and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population.

* Lower-bound estimate based on Hispanic and Dominican population trends.

Although the list presented in Table 7 shows the Dominican population residing within the confines of what are defined as central cities, the reality is that Dominicans also locate around them, that is, in the wider metropolitan areas that surround those cities. For instance, although only 12,208 Dominicans are estimated to reside in the central city of Miami in 2020, as much as 127,011 live in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metropolitan area. Table 8 shows selected metropolitan areas with significant Dominican populations. In addition to the Miami metro area, these include, of course, the New York City metropolitan area (the biggest one) with 1,185,698 Dominicans in 2020, the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford metropolitan area in Florida, with 67,160 Dominicans, the Providence-Warwick metro area bordering Rhode Island and Massachusetts, with 64,524, the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington area in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, with 61,946, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area in Florida, with 38,679, as well as in the Washington DC-Arlington-Alexandria Virginia areas, the Reading, Pennsylvania metro area, the Bridgeport-Hartford-Norwalk, Connecticut area, the Scranton-Wilkes Barre and Hazleton Pennsylvania area, and the Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia metro area bordering North Carolina and South Carolina.

Table 8
Geographical Dispersion of the Dominican Population:
Growth of Dominicans in Selected Metropolitan Areas and Counties, 2000-2020

County/Metropolitan Area	2020 Population	2010 Population	2000 Population
Selected Metropolitan Areas			
New York Metro Area, NY-NJ-PA	1,185,698	906,261	704,906
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm, FL	127,011	98,854	68,248
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	67,160	35,604	12,589
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	64,524	47,941	24,939
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA,DE	61,946	32,797	10,408
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	38,679	17,950	6,942
Washington DC-Arlington-Alexandria	33,248	16,050	10,365
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	25,373	16,860	3,326
Reading, PA	23,341	11,589	2,209
Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	20,755	8,692	5,446
Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton, PA	20,784	7,117	357
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	17,202	3,102	1,364
Selected Counties			
Essex County, MA	76,863*	53,287	38,117
Passaic County, NJ	74,577	51,570	31,450
Middlesex County, NJ	47,664	26,605	15,219
Union County, NJ	23,654	13,984	6,970
Berks County, PA	23,342	11,803	2,209

Source: The 2000 figures are from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population, PUMS. Due to smaller sample sizes, the population estimates for 2010 are an average obtained from the 2009 to 2012 ACS; the estimates for 2020 are based on the ACS estimates for 2017 to 2019, and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

* Lower-bound estimate based on Hispanic and Dominican population trends

The distribution of Dominicans around certain cities is also represented by the counties in which these cities are located. For instance, as noted earlier, we estimate that the city of Lawrence, Massachusetts had 34,352 Dominicans residing in 2020, but Essex County, where Lawrence is located, had a total of 76,863 Dominicans living in it that year (this county includes the cities of Lynn and Methuen, where significant Dominican populations also exist). Similarly, the city of Paterson in New Jersey had 43,068 Dominicans in 2020 but the county of Passaic, where Paterson is located, had 74,577 Dominicans in residence. Other selected counties of substantial Dominican presence are Middlesex and Union counties in New Jersey, where the cities of Perth Amboy and Elizabeth are situated, and Berks County in Pennsylvania, where the city of Reading is located.

Table 6 showed that Dominican New Yorkers remain the locus of the Dominican community in the United States. The 737,143 Dominicans that we estimate were residing in New York City in 2020 were way above those in the second largest city of concentration of Dominicans in the country, Paterson, with 43,068. And in absolute numbers, the growth of Dominicans in New York City between 2010 and 2020, which we estimate was equal to 112,572, exceeds that of any other city in the country during this period.

At the same time, it must be recognized that although the Dominican population in New York City continued to grow in the last decade, the number of Dominicans residing outside New York has been increasing at a faster rate. As Table 9 depicts, the percentage of all Dominicans in the U.S. located in New York City declined from 73.8 percent in 1980, to 53.2 percent in 2000 and then to 33.3 percent in 2020.

Table 9
The Dominican Population in the U.S. and New York City, 1980-2020

Year	United States Dom. Population	New York City Dom. Population	New York as a % of the United States
1980	170,817	125,380	73.4%
1990	511,297	332,713	65.1%
2000	1,041,910	554,638	53.2%
2010	1,537,558	624,571	40.6%
2020	2,216,258	737,143	33.3%

Source: Data for 1980 to 2000 are from the US Census of Population PUMS; estimates for 2010 are from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS; estimates for 2020 are based on the 2019 ACS PUMS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

Table 10 shows the population distribution of the various major racial and ethnic groups in New York City, from 2000 to 2019. As can be seen, Dominicans are estimated to be now the largest Hispanic/Latino group in the city. Although Puerto Ricans for many years were the most populous Hispanic/Latino group in the city, the continuous increase of Dominicans combined with a declining Puerto Rican population has led to Dominicans overtaking the Puerto Rican population during the last decade. As a matter of fact, as noted earlier, the number of Dominicans in New York City rose by over 110,000 between 2010 and 2020. In absolute value, this was the largest population gain of any single, major ethnic and racial group in New York City during the decade, except for Asians.

Table 10
The Population of New York City
By Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2020

Population Group	Number in 2010	Number in 2020	Average Annual Growth Rate 2010-2020 (%)
Dominican	624,571	737,143	1.8%
New York City Overall	8,175,133	8,804,190	0.8%
Non-Hispanic White	2,722,904	2,719,856	-0.1%
Non-Hispanic Black	1,861,295	1,776,891	-0.5%
Non-Hispanic Asian	1,028,119	1,373,502	3.4%
Hispanic/Latino	2,336,076	2,490,350	0.7%
Puerto Rican	715,270	680,069	-0.5%
Mexican	324,349	331,140	0.2%

Source: For the major racial/ethnic groups, the data for 2010 and 2020 are from the 2010 and 2020 U.S. Census of Population; estimates for Dominicans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans are based on the 2019 American Community Survey PUMS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

The location of Dominican New Yorkers according to borough of residence is presented in Table 11. With an estimated population of 343,403 in 2020, almost half (46.6 percent) of all Dominicans in New York City now reside in the Bronx. Nonetheless, Manhattan is still a major center for Dominicans, with 174,214 (23.6 percent of the total), followed by Queens, with 106,588 Dominicans, and Brooklyn with 104,282. Staten Island had the fewest Dominicans in 2020, with 8,656, but the numbers are rapidly growing.

Table 11
The Dominican Population of New York City, By Borough
2000-2020

City Borough	Number In 2000	% of Total in 2000	Number in 2010	% of Total in 2010	Number in 2020	% of Total in 2020
Manhattan	185,808	33.5%	167,871	26.9%	174,214	23.6%
The Bronx	181,450	32.7%	254,297	40.7%	343,403	46.6%
Queens	95,267	17.2%	101,250	16.2%	106,588	14.5%
Brooklyn	89,567	16.1%	97,757	15.7%	104,282	14.1%
Staten Island	2,545	0.5%	3,396	0.5%	8,656	1.2%
Total NYC	554,638	100.0%	624,571	100.0%	737,143	100.0%

Source: Data for 2000 are from the US Census of Population PUMS; estimates for 2010 are from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS; estimates for 2020 are based on the 2019 ACS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

Within Manhattan, the overwhelming focus of location is the Washington Heights/Inwood area. In the Bronx, there are large settlements in Morris Heights, Highbridge, Univ. Heights, Morris Heights, the Concourse, Fordham, Bedford Park and Marble Hill. The largest concentration in Queens is in Corona, while in Brooklyn, the significant areas are Williamsburg, Bushwick, Sunset Park, and Cypress Hills.

One of the more significant developments in the location of the Dominican population of New York City is the rise of the Bronx. Up to the early 2000s, Manhattan represented the area of greatest concentration of Dominicans within the city and Puerto Ricans constituted the equivalent in the Bronx. Table 12 shows, however, how Dominicans overtook Puerto Ricans as the biggest Hispanic/Latino group in this borough during the last decade. The number of Puerto Ricans residing in the Bronx dropped from 316,931 in 2000 to 279,059 in 2020 while the Dominican population rose from 181,450 to 343,403 during the same period. Dominicans now account for 23.3 percent of all the residents of the Bronx while the equivalent for Puerto Ricans is 18.9 percent.

Table 12
The Rise of the Dominican Bronx, 2000-2020

Average for Years	Dominican Population in the Bronx	% of Bronx Population	Puerto Rican Population in the Bronx	% of Bronx Population
2020	343,403	23.3%	279,059	18.9%
2009-2010	248,456	17.9%	298,238	21.5%
2000	181,450	13.6%	316,931	23.8%

Source: Data for 2000 are from the US Census of Population PUMS; estimate for 2009-2010 is an average for those years obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS) PUMS; estimate for 2020 is based on the 2019 ACS and the 2020 U.S. Census of Population; authors' tabulations.

THE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF DOMINICANS

What is the current social and economic condition of the Dominican population in the United States? How does it compare with that of other groups in the country?

Experts often utilize mean household income in comparing the average standard of living of various groups in the population. But in inter-group comparisons, one should consider the fact that the number of people residing in a household may vary across groups. Because of this variability, two households with identical income may have widely different standards of living: if one household has ten persons living in it while the other has only three, the standard of living is much higher in the latter. To adjust for differences in household size, economists divide household income by the number of persons in the household to compute per-capita household income. This adjustment is important because there is great variability in the average number of persons per household across the various groups considered.

Table 13 presents the differences in average annual household income per capita prevailing in the United States in 2019. Note that the income differentials between the Dominican population and the rest of the population are substantial. In 2019, Dominicans had an annual household income per-capita of \$22,551, which was 61 percent of the per-capita income of the average household in the country, equal to \$36,990. On the other hand, relative to the overall Hispanic/Latino population, which had \$23,750 in income per-capita in 2019, the shortfall is much smaller.

Table 13
Per-Capita Income in the U.S., By Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Mean Annual Household Income Per-Capita, 2019
Dominican Population	\$22,551
United States Average	\$36,990
Non-Hispanic White Population	\$42,607
Non-Hispanic Black Population	\$ 25,728
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	\$44,539
Hispanic/Latino Population	\$23,750

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019, authors' tabulations.

The comparatively low income of Dominicans relative to the overall population in the country is reflected as well in relatively high poverty rates. Poverty status is determined by comparing the income of the family where the person lives with an income threshold measuring the financial resources that a family needs to satisfy basic needs (food, etc.). This threshold is adjusted by inflation and varies with the number of persons in the family, number of children, and age of family members. For instance, in 2019, the average income threshold for a household consisting of two adults under the age of 65 with one child was \$20,578, but for a household of two adults and three children, the threshold rises to \$30,510. The poverty rate is the percentage of persons living in households with income below the poverty income threshold.

Table 14 shows that Dominicans have one of the highest poverty rates of the groups presented. Close to one out of every five Dominicans, 19 percent, lived in households with income under the poverty line in 2019. The overall poverty rate in the U.S. was 12.4 percent and among Hispanics/Latinos in general it was 17.3 percent. Only the non-Hispanic Black population had a higher poverty rate, equal to 21.2 percent in 2019.

Table 14
Poverty in the U.S., 2019
By Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	% of Persons in the Group Below the Poverty Level 2019
Dominican Population	19.0%
United States Average	12.4%
Non-Hispanic White Population	9.1%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	21.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	9.7%
Hispanic/Latino Population	17.3%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019, authors' tabulations.

But although the higher poverty rates and shortfall in the income per-capita of Dominicans relative to the overall population in the U.S. are substantial, there has also been significant progress over time. Consider income per-capita. Two decades ago, in 1999, the per-capita income of the Dominican population was 50 percent of the average in the United States, rising to 57 percent in 2009 and then, as stated earlier, to 61 percent in 2019. In fact, as Table 15 presents, Dominicans have had one of the highest average household income per-capita growth rates of any major racial and ethnic group in the United States over the last 20 years. In the decade of 1999 to 2009, the income per-capita of Dominicans rose an average of 1.3 percent per year, while it declined for the U.S. population overall. In the more recent period of 2009 to 2019, Dominican income per-capita rose by an average of 2.6 percent per year, but the equivalent increase for the overall population in the country was 1.6 percent.

Table 15
Changes in Household Income Per-Capita in the United States, 1999-2019
By Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Household Income Per-Capita			Average Annual Growth (%)	
	2019	2009	1999	2009-2019	1999-2009
Dominican Population	\$22,551	\$17,840	\$15,772	2.60%	1.31%
United States Average	\$ 36,990	\$31,775	\$31,481	1.64%	-0.10%
Non-Hispanic White Population	\$42,607	\$36,691	\$35,902	1.61%	0.22%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	\$25,728	\$21,540	\$20,691	1.94%	0.40%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	\$44,540	\$35,568	\$31,729	2.52%	1.21%
Hispanic/Latino Population	\$23,751	\$18,705	\$17,793	2.70%	0.51%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2020 and 2010; U.S. Census of Population PUMS for 2000; authors' tabulations. The figures have been adjusted for inflation (all expressed in 2019 \$).

Poverty rates among Dominicans have also fallen sharply over time. Table 16 displays the changes in average poverty rates in the U.S. from 1999 to 2019, decomposed by race and ethnicity. As can be seen, the poverty rate among Dominicans declined from 27.5 percent in 1999 to 25.6 percent in 2009 and then all the way down to 19.0 percent in 2019. By contrast, the overall poverty rate in the country was about equal in 1999 and 2019: it first rose from 12.4 percent in 1999 to 14.4 percent in 2009 and then declined back to 12.4 percent in 2019. The precipitous decline in poverty rates among Dominicans is the largest of any of the various racial and ethnic groups presented in Table 16.

Table 16
Changes in Poverty Rates in the United States, 1999-2019
By Race and Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Poverty Rate (%)		
	2019	2009	1999
Dominican Population	19.0%	25.6%	27.5%
United States Average	12.4%	14.4%	12.4%
Non-Hispanic White Population	9.1%	10.1%	8.2%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	21.2%	25.8%	24.8%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	9.7%	11.4%	12.6%
Hispanic/Latino Population	17.3%	23.5%	22.5%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2009 and 2019, and 2000 US Census PUMS; authors' tabulations.

The socioeconomic status of Dominicans varies quite a bit by geography. Table 17 presents the average annual household income per-capita in 2016-2019 for the Dominican population in the states with the largest Dominican communities.⁹ As can be seen, New Jersey represents the state with the highest per-capita income, with \$23,121, followed closely by Florida, with \$22,974. The states with the lowest income per-capita: Pennsylvania, with \$16,608 and Rhode Island, with \$17,661. This represents tremendous inequality: the average income per-capita of Dominicans in New Jersey is close to 40 percent above that of Dominicans in Pennsylvania.

Table 17
The Per-Capita Income of Dominicans in the U.S., By State

State	Mean Annual Household Income Per-Capita, 2017-2019
Overall Dominican Population	\$21,624
New Jersey	\$23,191
Florida	\$22,974
Connecticut	\$ 21,183
New York	\$20,893
Massachusetts	\$20,878
Rhode Island	\$17,661
Pennsylvania	\$16,608

Because of small sample sizes provided by the ACS for some of the states, the figures presented in this table are the average for mean household per capita income received during the years 2017, 2018, and 2019, with adjustments made for inflation on a regional basis (data expressed in 2019 \$).

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2017, 2018 and 2019, authors' tabulations.

⁹ The figures presented in Table 17 are an average for the period of 2016 to 2019. The reason for this aggregation is that the relatively small sample sizes for Dominicans in some states make the yearly estimates provided by the ACS less reliable for them. Combining various years (with the appropriate adjustment for inflation) allows more accurate estimates.

Table 17 showed that Dominicans in New York State have a per-capita income that is somewhat below the average for the United States. Since the great majority of Dominicans in New York State are in New York City, this indicator applies to them as well. Table 18 shows the annual income per-capita of the major racial and ethnic groups in New York City. The mean per-capita income of Dominicans in 2019 was \$20,414, which is the lowest per-capita income among all the major racial and ethnic groups in New York City. Compared to the average for New York City, Dominican per-capita income was less than half. On the other hand, the per-capita income of the overall Hispanic/Latino population in the city was \$23,750 in 2019, which is also substantially below the city average.

Table 18
The Socioeconomic Status of Dominicans in New York City, 2019

Racial/Ethnic Group	Mean Annual Household Income Per-Capita, 2019 New York City	Poverty Rate New York City
Dominican Population	\$20,414	21.8%
New York City Average	\$43,948	16.0%
Non-Hispanic White Population	\$69,679	9.9%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	\$30,448	19.4%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	\$40,786	14.4%
Hispanic/Latino Population	\$25,978	21.0%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019, authors' tabulations.

The comparatively low income of Dominican New Yorkers is reflected in relatively high poverty rates. Table 18 shows that Dominicans had the highest poverty rate of all the groups presented in 2019, equal to about 22 percent, although it was about the same as that for Hispanics/Latinos in general, whose poverty rate was slightly over 21 percent and close to the poverty rate among Black/African American New Yorkers, who had a 19.4 percent poverty rate. The overall poverty rate in the city was 16 percent in 2019.

Although the socioeconomic status of Dominican New Yorkers in 2019 was lower compared to others in the city, the situation has improved substantially over the last two decades. Indeed, Dominicans displayed both a considerable increase in income and a remarkable decrease in poverty, more than any other major racial/ethnic group in New York City. Table 19 displays the changes in the average household per-capita income of Dominican New Yorkers in the period of 2009 to 2019, compared to those in the city overall (the 2009 figures have been adjusted for inflation and converted into their 2019-dollar equivalent). As can be seen, the rise in per-capita income of Dominican New Yorkers was significant, from \$15,362 to \$20,414, which constitutes a 3.2 percent average increase per year during the decade. This is almost double New York City's overall average income per-capita growth per year, which was 1.7 percent.

Table 19
Changes in Household Income Per-Capita in New York City, 2009-2019
By Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Group	Household Income Per-Capita		Average Annual Growth (%)
	2019	2009	2009-2019
Dominican Population	\$20,414	\$15,362	3.28%
New York City Average	\$43,948	\$37,431	1.74%
Hispanic/Latino Population	\$25,978	\$20,348	2.77%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2009; authors' tabulations. The figures have been adjusted for inflation (all expressed in 2019 \$).

Just as it does at the national level, the sustained growth of income per-capita among Dominicans in New York City over time reflects itself in a remarkable drop of poverty rates. Table 20 shows that Dominicans had an average poverty rate of 32.8 percent in 1999, which drops to 22 percent in 2019. This is the biggest drop of poverty rates among all the major racial and ethnic groups in New York City. Overall, in the city, poverty rates dropped as well, but not as much: from 21.3 to 16 percent.

Table 20
Changes in Poverty Rates for New York City, 1999-2019

Racial/Ethnic Group	Poverty Rate (%)		
	2019	2009	1999
Dominican Population	22.0%	32.5%	32.8%
New York City Average	16.0%	18.7%	21.3%
Non-Hispanic White Population	10.0%	10.8%	9.7%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	19.3%	20.3%	23.6%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	14.5%	18.0%	18.2%
Hispanic/Latino Population	21.2%	27.8%	29.7%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2009 and 2019, and 2000 US Census PUMS; authors' tabulations.

Despite the substantial progress in the last two decades, the relatively low income and high poverty rates still facing many Dominicans --in New York City and elsewhere-- represents a serious challenge. What explains the lower socioeconomic status of Dominicans compared to the average population in the United States? The next sections explore some of the key forces. The next section examines the role of demographic factors, such as age, family structure and immigration.¹⁰ Labor market forces follow, including labor force participation, unemployment, and earnings. This analysis leads to a discussion of the role played by educational attainment in explaining differences in economic outcomes. Later sections examine in detail current educational indicators among Dominicans, and specify the prospects facing the second and third generations of Dominicans in the U.S.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the key factors affecting poverty among the Hispanic/Latino population, see Rivera-Batiz (2005).

DEMOGRAPHY AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

One possible set of explanations for the high poverty rates among Dominicans is demographic. The age structure of a population, for instance, makes a significant difference in terms of income: except for the very old, as individuals age, they generally have greater income. As a result, if the median age of a population is less than that of other groups, its average income tends to be lower and poverty rates higher.

Dominicans are younger on average than the rest of the U.S. population. Table 21 presents the age distribution of the U.S. and New York City populations, by race and ethnicity. The overall Dominican population in the U.S. had a median age of about 32 years in 2020, and it was somewhat higher for New York City Dominicans, who had a median age of 35 years in 2020. This is substantially lower than the median age in the United States, which was equal to 43 years in 2020, as well as in New York City, where the median age was 39 years. The young age of Dominicans helps to explain their lower income since labor market rewards are positively correlated with age, seniority, and on-the-job experience, an issue to be explored in a larger section.

Table 21
The Median Age of Dominicans in the United States and New York City
2020 versus 2000

Racial/Ethnic Group	United States		New York City	
	2020	2000	2020	2000
Dominican Population	32	28	35	28
Total Population	43	35	39	34
Non-Hispanic White Population	48	39	41	41
Non-Hispanic Black Population	40	30	43	32
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	39	33	39	33
Hispanic/Latino Population	31	25	36	29

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and US Census PUMS 2000; authors' tabulations.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Dominican population in the U.S. is getting older. Table 21 shows that the median age of Dominicans in the country rose from 28 years in 2000 to 32 years in 2020. And in New York City, the increase has been from 28 years to 35 years. This aging of Dominicans corresponds—but is not as deep as—the aging of the American population in general. As Table 21 depicts: the median age of the population in the U.S. jumped from 35 year in 2000 to 43 years in 2020.

A second issue connected to age relates to two groups in the population whose socioeconomic status has been of particular concern over the years: children and older populations. The situation of children, specifically, has been in the headlines recently, as the administration of President Joseph Biden has made reducing child poverty a leading force in its policy agenda. This goal was embodied in the American Rescue Plan of 2021, which temporarily

increased the child tax credit from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for children under 17 and \$3,600 for children under six. The Build Back Better Legislation promoted by the Biden Administration, which has not passed the Senate, would make the tax credit permanent. The objective of these policy initiatives is of course to reduce child poverty.

A substantial body of literature has now shown that children living in poverty are significantly affected by the limited resources they have available, both in terms of their immediate physical and psychological condition, but also later in life, in terms of educational and labor market outcomes. As a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences concludes: “the weight of the causal evidence does indeed indicate that income poverty itself causes negative child outcomes, especially when poverty occurs in early childhood or persists throughout a large portion of childhood” [Duncan and Menestrel (2019), p. 2].

Table 22 shows poverty rates prevailing in 2019 among three age groups: children (aged less than 17 years), adults aged 18 to 64, and adults aged over 64 years of age. As before, all the poverty rates among the Dominican groups exceed those for the overall population, but they were particularly high at the extremes of the age distribution: older persons and children. Among older Dominicans (over 64 years of age), about one third—32.6 percent—lived in household that were poor, which is more than triple the poverty rate for the overall population of older Americans, which was 9.5 percent in 2019, and substantially above that of Hispanics/Latinos in general, which had a 17.5 poverty rate in 2019. The socioeconomic status of older Dominicans should be a matter for serious concern among policymakers.

Table 22
Poverty among Children and Older Americans in the United States, 2009-2019

Age Group	Proportion of Persons in the Age Group Living Under the Poverty Line	
	2019	2009
	United States Overall	
Age 0 to 17	17.1%	20.4%
Age 18 to 64	11.5	13.0
Age Over 64	9.5	9.5
	Dominicans in the United States	
Age 0 to 17	23.3%	33.3%
Age 18 to 64	15.3	21.1
Age Over 64	32.6	32.9
	Hispanics/Latinos in the United States	
Age 0 to 17	23.7%	31.1%
Age 18 to 64	14.0	19.5
Age Over 64	17.5	18.7

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2009; authors’ tabulations.

The poverty rate among Dominican children in 2019 was also comparatively high. Almost one-quarter—23.3 percent—of Dominican children lived in poor households in 2019. For the American population in general, the poverty rate among children was 17.1 percent. On the other hand, the poverty rate among Hispanics/Latinos in general was slightly higher than for Dominicans, equal to 23.7 percent.

Despite the comparatively high rates of child poverty prevailing in the Dominican population, there has been substantial progress over the last ten years, a trend that exists as well among the overall American population but that is greater among Dominicans. As Table 22 depicts, the poverty rate among Dominican children dropped from 33.3 percent in 2009 to 23.3 percent in 2019, a drop of ten percentage points. Among the American population overall, the drop in child poverty was from 20.4 percent to 17.1 percent, a decline of about 3 percentage points. Among Hispanics/Latinos overall, the child poverty rate dropped from 31 percent in 2009 to 23.7 percent in 2019, a decline of about 7 percentage points.

Child poverty varies by family structure. Because of the substantially lower income earned by women—particularly black and Hispanic women—in the labor market (as will be documented later), families headed by separated or divorced women with children or other family members living in the household, as well as single women with children, tend to have lower income and higher poverty than married couple families.¹¹ As a result, the percentage of poor children residing in female-headed households is much higher. For instance, 13 percent of Hispanic children living in married-couple families in 2019 were poor, while the equivalent figure for Hispanic children in female-headed households was 41 percent.¹²

11 Family structure has been one of the key forces associated with poverty; see for example Aber et. al. (2015, chapter 3), Haskins (2015), and Bauer, Moss and Stambaugh (2019).

12 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2021), p. 14.

Table 23 presents the proportion of persons residing in households headed by women, which includes households in which women declare they are the heads of the household and where there are children or other family members living in the household but no spouse.¹³ The data are presented for the major racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Among Dominicans in the United States, 28.4 percent lived in female-headed households in 2019. The proportion was higher for Dominican New Yorkers, for whom 35.4 percent lived in this type of household. Both figures are above those for the overall population and for the Hispanic/Latino population overall.

Table 23
Persons in Female-Headed Households in the U.S. and New York City, 2000-2019
Expressed as a % of all Persons

Racial/Ethnic Group	United States		New York City	
	2019	2000	2019	2000
Dominican Population	28.4%	30.5%	35.4%	35.5%
Total Population	13.9%	13.6%	20.8%	22.9%
Non-Hispanic White Population	9.6%	9.5%	10.2%	11.0%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	30.8%	34.3%	34.5%	38.1%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	9.4%	9.6%	12.1%	9.8%
Hispanic/Latino Population	17.7%	6.9%	27.5%	30.1%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and US Census PUMS 2000; authors' tabulations.

The proportion of women in female-headed households has generally declined since 2000 but not to a significant extent. As Table 23 depicts, among Dominicans, the proportion of women in female-headed households declined from 30.5 percent in 2000 to 28.4 percent in 2019, and among Dominican New Yorkers the proportion did not change, equal to 35.5 percent in 2000 and 35.4 percent in 2019. The lack of change in the proportion of female-headed households in the population also occurs among the overall population, where it was 13.6 percent in 2000 and 13.9 percent in 2019. In New York City, the proportion of female-headed households was equal to 22.9 percent in 2000 and 20.8 percent in 2019.

¹³ Other categories of households include females living alone, males living alone, male-headed households with children or other family members but no spouse present, and married households.

As mentioned earlier, persons living in female-headed households tend to have on average higher poverty rates relative to other households. Consider the case of New York City. Table 24 presents poverty rates among female-headed and other households in New York City in 2019. For Dominican New Yorkers, about one-third (33.4 percent) of persons living in female-headed household were poor, but among other households it was 15.8 percent. For the overall New York City population, the poverty rate among persons in female-headed households was 24.7 percent, but only 14.6 percent in other households. Among Hispanics/Latinos in general, the poverty rate in female-headed households was 32.6 percent and among other households it was 16.8 percent.

Table 24
Poverty and Female-Headed Households, New York City, 2019

	Proportion of persons living under poverty line	
	Female-Headed Households	Other Households
Dominican Population	33.4%	15.8%
New York City Population	24.7%	14.6%
Non-Hispanic White Population	14.0%	9.6%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	24.9%	16.8%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	22.8%	13.6%
Hispanic/Latino Population	32.6%	16.8%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019; authors' tabulations.

A third factor that relates to the socioeconomic status of Dominicans is the substantial proportion of its population that consists of immigrants, particularly recent immigrants, as was documented in the previous section. Recent immigrants tend to have lower income, holding other things constant.¹⁴ This is partly explained by the fact that it takes time for them to adjust to the new labor market. Recent immigrants often take jobs in the short run that do not correspond to their skill levels in the source countries. And they need time to strengthen their English language proficiency, which is essential for obtaining many higher-paying jobs.¹⁵ Although ethnic enclaves in large cities allow immigrants with limited English language proficiency to find an array of jobs, the employment opportunities are limited. And in smaller cities, such opportunities are scarcer.

¹⁴ See Rivera-Batiz (2007).

¹⁵ See Rivera-Batiz (1996) and (2017).

Table 25 shows the percentage of the population among Dominicans and the overall U.S. population in three categories: persons who (1) speak only English at home, (2) do not speak English at home but speak English well or very well, and (3) do not speak English at all or do not speak English well. In the overall population, only 3.8 percent of the U.S. population is in category (3): does not speak English at all or not very well, but among Dominicans—reflecting the high proportion of recent immigrants—as much as 24.9 percent are in category (3), declaring they do not speak English at all or not very well. The same differences exist in New York City, where only 11.6 percent of the overall city population does not speak English well or not at all, compared to 30.6 percent among Dominican New Yorkers. Note that Dominicans are not the only group displaying lower English language proficiency, groups with significant numbers of recent immigrants also have substantial proportions of their population with lower English proficiency, such as Cubans, who had 24.2 percent of the population who did not know English well or at all, and the Salvadoran population, where the corresponding proportion was 26.8 percent, which is higher than for Dominicans.

Table 25
English Language Proficiency of the Population, 2020*

	Proportion of persons who		
	Speak Only English At Home	Speaks English Well Or Very Well	Does Not Speak English or Not Well
United States			
Dominican Population	14.4%	60.7%	24.9%
United States Population	78.8%	17.4%	3.8%
Hispanic/Latino Population	30.4%	54.3%	15.3%
Cuban Population	23.7%	52.1%	24.2%
Salvadorean Population	12.5%	60.7%	26.8%
New York City			
Dominican Population	9.1%	60.9%	30.0%
New York City Population	51.8%	36.9%	11.3%
Hispanic/Latino Population	20.1%	59.2%	20.7%

* The data for Dominicans, Hispanics/Latinos, Cubans and Salvadoreans are an average for 2019 and 2020.

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2020; authors' tabulations.

English language skills are connected to household income per-capita. Table 26 presents the average household income per-capita of Dominicans based on their English language skills. As can be seen, there is a substantial wedge among the categories. The income per-capita of persons who only speak English at home was \$27,738 while that of persons who do not know English at all or did not know English well was \$18,342, which is a more than 50 percent difference. These gaps also hold for New York City.

Table 26
English Language Proficiency and Per-Capita Income among Dominicans

	Average Household Income Per-Capita of Dominicans in 2018 and 2019	
	United States	New York City
Speaks Only English At Home	\$27,738	\$26,107
Speaks English Well Or Very Well	\$24,806	\$22,609
Does Not Spean English Or Not Very Well	\$18,342	\$16,945

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2020; authors' tabulations.

The data presented in this section has documented the substantial income differences that exist among Dominicans due to various demographic characteristics, whether age, family structure, immigration status, etc. At the same time, the data also show that there remain significant gaps between the socioeconomic status of Dominicans and the rest of the U.S. population independently of any demographic characteristics. This suggests that other economic forces are compounding demographic factors in influencing the social and economic status of Dominicans. The next section examines the basic labor market indicators for the Dominican population relative to other groups in the United States. This includes an analysis of labor force participation rates, unemployment, industry, and occupational distributions. The discussion focuses on the period before the pandemic, up to 2019. A later section will examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labor market situation of Dominicans.

LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES OF DOMINICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

The lower income and higher poverty rates facing the Dominican population, compared to other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, can be explained in part by the labor market challenges they encounter. The key labor market outcomes to analyze include: (1) labor force participation, (2) employment or unemployment rate of those persons who are in the labor force, and (3) earnings received by those who are employed. This section examines these indicators for both Dominicans as well as for the overall population of the United States, focusing on the situation in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Labor Force Participation and Unemployment

Table 27 presents average U.S. labor force participation rates in 2019, decomposed by race/ethnicity and gender. For both men and women, the labor force participation rates among Dominicans are significantly above those for the overall population of the United States. The proportion of Dominican men participating in the labor force (employed or unemployed) was 74.4 percent, well above the overall participation rate in the nation of 68.6 percent. Among Dominican women, 64.7 percent were participating in the labor market in 2019, compared to 58.8 percent among the overall population. In fact, Dominican women have the highest female labor force participation rate in the country, compared to other major racial and ethnic groups; Dominican men also have among the highest participation rates.

Table 27
Labor Force Participation Rates, United States, 2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	
	Male	Female
Dominican Population	74.4%	64.7%
United States Overall	68.6%	58.8%
Non-Hispanic White Population	67.3%	57.1%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	62.9%	63.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	73.2%	60.1%
Hispanic/Latino Population	75.8%	60.9%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019; authors' tabulations.

The comparatively high labor force participation rates of Dominicans at the present time contrast with those we presented in our profile of this population in 2000 [see Hernandez and Rivera-Batiz, 2000]. In that year, the labor force participation rates prevailing among both Dominican men and women were substantially lower than the overall rates for the American population. Table 28 presents the labor force participation rates of Dominicans in 2000, 2010 and 2019. The average participation rate of Dominican men rose from 64 percent in 2000 to 72.7 percent in 2010 and then to 74.4 percent in 2019. Among Dominican women, the increase was from 53.1 percent in 2000 to 61.7 percent in 2010 and to 64.7 percent in 2019. Note that, as Table 28 shows, the overall male labor force participation rate in the U.S. dropped from 72.7 percent in 2000 to 68.6 percent in 2019. Among women, the overall labor force participation rate remained unchanged, equal to 58.9 percent in 2000 and 58.8 percent in 2019.

Table 28
Changes in Labor Force Participation Rates, United States, 2000-2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group And Year	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	
	Male	Female
	2019	
Dominican Population	74.4%	64.7%
United States Overall	68.6%	58.8%
Hispanic/Latino Population	75.8%	60.9%
	2010	
Dominican Population	72.7%	61.7%
United States Overall	69.8%	59.3%
Hispanic/Latino Population	76.2%	59.0%
	2000	
Dominican Population	64.0%	53.1%
United States	72.7%	58.5%
Hispanic/Latino Population	69.4%	52.9%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2010 and US Census PUMS 2000; authors' tabulations.

The climbing labor force participation rates among Dominican men and women also occurred in New York City. Table 29 displays these changes. For Dominican men, the average participation rate rose from 60.9 percent in 2000 to 70 percent in 2019. Among women, the increase was from 49.1 percent to 60 percent. Participation rates increased as well in New York City overall between 2000 and 2019, but not as much as among the Dominican population. For the city, the rise was from 66.9 percent in 2000 to 69 percent in 2019 among men and from 53.5 percent to 59.5 percent among women.

Table 29
Labor Force Participation Rates, New York City
Average for 2018-2019 Compared with 2000
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Year	Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	
		Male	Female
Dominican Population	2018-19	70.2%	60.0%
	2000	60.9%	49.1%
New York City Overall	2019	69.0%	59.5%
	2000	66.9%	53.5%
Non-Hispanic White Population	2019	70.6%	62.0%
	2000	69.3%	53.5%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	2019	62.4%	59.3%
	2000	62.8%	57.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	2019	70.7%	59.0%
	2000	70.3%	53.7%
Hispanic/Latino Population	2019	70.0%	56.4%
	2000	64.2%	48.3%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2015-2019 and US Census PUMS 2000; authors' tabulations.

Table 30 displays the proportion of the labor force that was unemployed in 2019, decomposed by race and ethnicity. Dominicans had an unemployment rate that was substantially higher than the overall population. The unemployment rate among Dominicans in the country was 6.5 percent, compared to 4.5 percent for the overall population. The same pattern holds for New York City, where Dominican unemployment was 8.6 percent in 2019, compared to 5.3 percent for the overall population of New Yorkers. Dominican unemployment also exceeded that of Hispanics/Latinos in general, equal to 5.1 percent in the U.S. and 5.3 percent in New York City.

Table 30
Unemployment Rates, United States and New York City, 2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	United States	New York City
Dominican Population	6.5%	8.6%
Overall Population	4.5%	5.3%
Non-Hispanic White Population	3.8%	3.4%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	7.8%	7.1%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	3.5%	4.4%
Hispanic/Latino Population	5.1%	5.3%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019; authors' tabulations.

There are gender differences in unemployment rates. Table 31 shows unemployment rates in 2018-2019, where the figures represent an average for 2018 and 2019 (due to small sample sizes, data for the two years were pooled together). Among Dominican men, the unemployment rate was 7.2 percent and for women it was 6.6 percent, compared to 4.8 percent and 4.6 percent respectively for men and women overall in the United States. The same pattern also holds in New York City, with men having somewhat higher unemployment rates than women.

Table 31
Unemployment Rates, United States, By Gender
Average for 2018-2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	Male	Female
United States		
Dominican Population	7.2%	6.6%
United States Overall	4.8%	4.6%
Non-Hispanic White Population	3.9%	3.7%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	9.1%	7.5%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	3.6%	3.8%
Hispanic/Latino Population	4.9%	5.9%
New York City		
Dominican Population	9.6%	7.0%
New York City Overall	5.7%	5.2%
Non-Hispanic White Population	3.6%	3.4%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	8.5%	6.7%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	4.4%	4.5%
Hispanic/Latino Population	6.9%	6.6%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2018; authors' tabulations.

What explains the substantially higher unemployment rates of Dominicans relative to other workers? Location matters. Different parts of the United States have had different rates of economic growth, depending on the composition of their industries and the particular business cycles affecting the region. For instance, the 2008-2010 economic crisis hit the financial sector particularly hard, and this led to a slower recovery in New York City compared to the rest of the nation. Table 32 shows the different unemployment rates in various locations within the U.S. in 2018-2019. As can be seen, New York City and New York State had the highest unemployment rates among Dominicans, equal to 8.6 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively. But Dominicans in Florida and New Jersey had much lower unemployment rates, equal to 4.9 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively.

Table 32
Unemployment Rates among Dominicans, By Residence, Average for 2018-2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Location of Residence	Unemployment Rate, Dominican Population (%)
United States Overall	6.9%
New York State	7.6%
New Jersey	5.1%
Florida	4.9%
New York City	8.2%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2018; authors' tabulations.

In addition to geography, education is another major force affecting unemployment. Higher unemployment rates are significantly linked to educational attainment: the lower the educational attainment, the higher the unemployment rate, holding other things constant. This connection is clearly displayed by Table 33, which shows the unemployment rate prevailing among Dominicans in the U.S. in 2019 by the highest level of schooling attained. Dominicans with less than a high school education had an average unemployment rate equal to 11.5 percent, compared to an 8.8 percent unemployment rate among those who had completed a high school diploma, 7.0 percent with those with some college education (but less than a college degree), and 4.6 percent for college graduates. Similar gaps in unemployment rates by educational attainment can be found in New York City, as Table 33 shows.

Table 33
Unemployment Rates among Dominicans, By Educational Attainment
Average for 2015-2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Educational Attainment	Unemployment Rate for Dominicans (%)	
	United States Overall	New York City
Less than High School	11.5%	12.6%
High School	8.8%	9.1%
Some College	7.0%	8.3%
College or More	4.6%	4.5%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2015-2019; authors' tabulations.

Age has a major influence on unemployment rates, which are traditionally greater for young populations. As Table 34 shows, Dominicans in the U.S. aged 16 to 19 years had a whopping 24.5 percent unemployment rate, compared to an unemployment rate of 8.4 percent among the 20 to 29 population, 5.1 percent for the 30 to 39 age group, 4.1 percent for those aged 40 to 49, and 5 percent for persons 50 and over. The unemployment rate among Dominican youth (16 to 19 years of age) was even higher in New York City, equal to 38 percent in 2019.

Table 34
Unemployment Rates among Dominicans, By Age Group
Average for 2019
Persons 16 years of age or older

Age Group	Unemployment Rate for Dominicans (%)	
	United States Overall	New York City
16 to 19	24.5%	38.0%
20 to 29	8.4%	13.4%
30 to 39	5.1%	7.2%
40 to 49	4.1%	6.8%
50 and Over	5.0%	3.3%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2015-2019; authors' tabulations.

Industrial and Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force

The industrial sector and occupation of employment are both closely connected to socioeconomic status. Although the industry and occupation of a worker reflects in a large matter his or her educational attainment, age, etc., it is also true that the specific situation of those industries and occupations varies and can cause significant variations on unemployment rates and wages. Expanding industries and occupations can offer greater employment opportunities and salaries, while collapsing sectors can lead to higher unemployment and lower wages among its workers. In the case of the United States, for example, the secular decline of manufacturing has caused greater unemployment and lower income among many workers who form part of this sector. Other industries, such as the information and technology sector and health services, on the other hand, have expanded over the years, offering more abundant employment opportunities.

Table 35 presents the industrial composition of the labor force in the United States, compared to the Dominican labor force. The data reflect the sector of employment of persons in the labor force in 2019. For persons employed, this is their actual employment at the time of interview. For unemployed persons, it represents the industry of their last job.

Table 35
The Industrial Distribution of the Labor Force, 2019
Persons in the Labor Force, 16 Years of Age or Older

Industry	United States	Dominican
Agriculture, Mining, Fisheries and Forestry	2.9%	1.0%
Construction	6.8%	4.9%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	6.1%	5.4%
Manufacturing	9.9%	8.4%
Public Administration	4.5%	2.4%
Service Sector	42.2%	44.9%
Transport, Communications and Public Utilities	7.0%	10.2%
Wholesale and Retail Trade	20.7%	23.2%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey, PUMS; authors' tabulations.

The industrial distribution of Dominican workers in the U.S. does not differ substantially from that of the overall population. As Table 35 shows, the two sectors where Dominicans cluster are the service sector (44.9 percent of all workers) and the wholesale and retail trade sectors (23.2 percent), which are also the top employment industries for the overall population (equal to 42.2 and 20.7 percent, respectively). The third most important industry of employment among Dominicans is the transport, communications, and public utilities sector (with 10.2 percent of the total). On the other hand, Dominicans are seriously underrepresented in public administration: only 2.4 percent of all Dominican workers are employed in this sector, less than half the equivalent for the overall U.S., which has 4.5 percent of its labor force in public administration.

Table 36 shows the occupational distribution of the labor force in the United States for Dominicans and the overall U.S. population. As can be seen, in 2019, Dominicans were over-represented in service occupations, which account for 32.9 percent of Dominican workers. By comparison, the equivalent proportion among the overall U.S. was 18.5 percent. Dominicans were also over-represented in the precision production, craft and repair service occupations, with 21.7 percent of Dominicans employed in this sector while 14.1 percent of the overall U.S. labor force had those occupations. On the other hand, Dominicans were sharply under-represented among management and professional, occupations, which accounted for 21.9 percent of all Dominicans in the labor force, as compared to 38.1 percent in the U.S. population overall.

Table 36
Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force, United States
Average for 2018 and 2019
Persons in the Labor Force

Occupation	United States	Dominican
Management and Professional	38.1%	21.9%
Technical, Sales and Administrative	16.7%	14.2%
Service Workers	18.5%	32.9%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	9.8%	8.4%
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	14.1%	21.7%
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	2.8%	1.1%

Source: 2018 and 2019 American Community Survey, PUM; authors' tabulations.

There are substantial differences in the occupational distributions of men and women. Table 37 shows that service occupations were the most abundant among Dominican women, with 42 percent of all female workers employed in this sector. This sharply exceeds the equivalent proportion among U.S. women in general, which had 23.9 percent of their workers employed in service occupations. Among men, the dominant set of occupations were operators, fabricators and laborers, accounting for 30.7 percent of all Dominican men in the labor force. The equivalent proportion for the overall U.S. male population was much lower, equal to 12.3 percent.

Table 37
Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force, By Gender, United States
Average for 2018 and 2019
Persons in the Labor Force

Occupation	United States		Dominican	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management and Professional	31.6%	46.7%	17.9%	26.0%
Technical, Sales and Administrative	14.8%	18.8%	11.9%	16.7%
Service Workers	14.0%	23.8%	23.9%	42.0%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	15.4%	2.7%	13.9%	2.6%
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	20.2%	2.7%	30.7%	12.3%
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	4.0%	1.3%	1.7%	0.4%

Source: 2018 and 2019 American Community Survey, PUM; authors' tabulations.

The patterns observed for the Dominican occupational distribution in the overall United States can be seen as well among New Yorkers. Table 38 shows the various occupations held by the overall New York City workforce and among Dominican New Yorkers in 2018-2019. Table 38 shows that service occupations were the most abundant among Dominican women in New York, with 52.2 percent of all Dominican female workers employed in this sector. This sharply exceeds the equivalent proportion among New York City women in general, which had 21 percent of their workers employed in service occupations. Among men, the dominant set of occupations were operators, fabricators and laborers, accounting for 29.4 percent of all Dominican men in the labor force. The equivalent proportion for the overall New York City male workforce was 17.1 percent.

Table 38
Occupational Distribution of the Labor Force, By Gender, New York City
Average for 2018 and 2019
Persons in the Labor Force

Occupation	New York City		Dominican	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Management and Professional	37.3%	50.6%	15.7%	22.6%
Technical, Sales and Administrative	14.1%	15.6%	9.5%	16.2%
Service Workers	21.0%	28.6%	32.4%	52.2%
Precision Production, Craft and Repair	9.7%	1.6%	12.1%	2.0%
Operators, Fabricators and Laborers	17.1%	3.2%	29.4%	6.8%
Farming, Forestry and Fishing	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	0.2%

Source: 2018 and 2019 American Community Survey, PUMS; authors' tabulations.

Just as in the overall U.S. population, Dominican New Yorkers—both men and women—are drastically under-represented in the management and professional occupations. For Dominican women, 22.6 percent held these occupations, which is less than half of the equivalent for the overall New York City female population, which had 50.6 percent of its workforce in these occupations. Among men, Dominican New Yorkers had 15.7 percent of their workforce in the management and professional occupations, which is again less than half the equivalent among New York men in general, which had 37.3 percent of their labor force in this sector.

Workers in managerial and professional occupations generally tend to have higher wages. The substantial under-representation of Dominicans, both male and female, among these occupations would suggest their earnings also lie below the rest of the workforce. This is confirmed by the results presented in the next section

The Earnings of Dominican Workers

Earnings refer to the pre-tax wage and salary income that workers receive from their employers during a given period. This constitutes the major source of income in the economy. We separate the analysis of earnings for two types of workers: full-time versus part-time. Full-time workers include persons employed year-round (50 to 52 weeks per year) at 40 hours per week. Part-time workers include all others, which includes persons who, for whatever reasons, may be working in jobs that offer fewer than 40 hours a week or do not work year-round.

Table 39 shows the proportion of employees that are working full-time versus those employed part-time in 2019 and 1999. Most workers in the U.S. are employed full-time but there exists substantial gender-based differences. Among women, 57.1 percent were full-time workers in 2019 while among men the corresponding proportion was 68.3 percent. For Dominican women, 57.3 percent were employed full-time in 2019 versus 42.6 percent among men. But as Table 39 shows, there have been significant changes in these proportions over time. Among women, there is a sharp increase in the proportion who work full-time. Back in 1999, only 48.9 percent of women in the United States were employed full-time, which rises to 57.1 percent in 2019. Among men, 64.3 percent were working full-time in 1999, which rises to 68.3 percent in 2019. These results partly reflect changes in gender roles regarding labor market participation, which have led climbing full-time employment rates among women. In the case of the Dominican population, the proportion of workers employed full-time has risen as well for both men and women. Dominican women increased their rate of full-time employment from 42.6 percent in 1999 to 57.3 percent while the proportion of men employed full-time also rose, from 56.3 percent in 1999 to 71.1 percent in 2019.

Table 39
Full-Time versus Part-Time Workers in the United States
1999 to 2019
Employed persons 16 years of age or older, % in Each Category

Group of Workers	2019		1999	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Female Workers				
Dominican	57.3%	42.7%	42.6%	57.4%
United States Overall	57.1%	42.9%	51.1%	48.9%
Male Workers				
Dominican	71.1%	28.9%	56.3%	43.7%
United States Overall	68.3%	31.7%	64.3%	35.7%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population 5% PUMS; 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

As can be expected because of their lower work hours, the average earnings of part-time workers are substantially lower than those of full-time employees. Part-time Dominican workers, for example, earn an average of \$12,932 per year while full time workers earn an average of \$46,326. These gaps are reflected as well for the overall United States.

Most of the labor force is employed on a full-time basis. The analysis thus focuses now on the earnings of these workers. Table 40 shows the average earnings of workers employed full-time, year-round in 2019 (for all persons aged 16 or older). As can be seen, the average annual earnings of Dominican were among the lowest of all the racial and ethnic groups examined. For Dominican men, annual earnings in 2019 were on average equal to \$50,804, substantially below those of the overall male worker population, whose average earnings were \$72,390 in 2019. Among Dominican women, the annual earnings of \$40,980 in 1999 were also significantly lower than those for the overall female workforce, which were equal to \$55,060 in 2019. For both men and women, the earnings of Dominican workers were about the same on average as those for the Hispanic population overall, but much lower than those prevailing among the White and Asian populations.

Table 40
The Annual Earnings of Workers in the United States, 2019
Year-Round, Full-Time Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Average Annual Earnings	
	Male	Female
Dominican	\$50,804	\$40,980
United States Overall	\$72,390	\$55,060
Non-Hispanic White	\$80,949	\$59,133
Non-Hispanic Black	\$51,227	\$45,836
Non-Hispanic Asian	\$93,755	\$72,963
Hispanic/Latino	\$50,607	\$41,503

Source: 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

As with all groups in the population, Dominican women had on average lower earnings than men, equal to about 80 percent of their male counterparts. This is despite the fact that, as will be seen in a later section, women in general—both Dominican and the overall population—tend to have higher educational attainment than men.

The shortfall in the earnings of Dominican workers is magnified in New York City. Table 41 shows the average earnings of full-time year-round employees for various racial and ethnic groups in the city. The figures are an average for 2018 and 2019. As can be observed, the average earnings for Dominican men were equal to \$44,960 in 2018-2019 and among women they were equal to \$38,657. The great earnings inequality in New York City, relative to the U.S. overall, can be seen when one compares the earnings of Dominican New Yorkers with those of the overall workforce in the city, which were equal to \$87,640 for men and \$72,669 for women. This means that both male and female Dominican workers made just slightly over half of the yearly earnings of the overall population in New York City. This is a much greater wedge when compared to the overall U.S. earnings gap.

Table 41
The Annual Earnings of Workers in New York City
Average for 2018 and 2019*
Year-Round, Full-Time Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Average Annual Earnings	
	Male	Female
Dominican	\$44,960	\$38,657
New York City Overall	\$87,640	\$72,669
Non-Hispanic White	\$129,340	\$97,865
Non-Hispanic Black	\$59,865	\$57,217
Non-Hispanic Asian	\$84,599	\$78,634
Hispanic/Latino	\$53,721	\$49,560

* Data for 2018 has been adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2019 dollars.
Source: 2018 and 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

Despite the relatively lower earnings of Dominican workers, the situation has improved with respect to the past. Table 42 shows the changes in the average earnings of year-round, full-time workers for Dominicans and the overall population of the United States from 1999 to 2019. The earnings for 1999 and 2009 were adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2019 dollars. The average earnings of Dominican workers rose from \$38,685 in 1999 to \$40,976 in 2009 and then to \$46,325 in 2019. This constitutes an average annual growth rate of 0.6 percent per year in the 2000s and 1.3 percent per year in the 2010s, both greater than the average growth of wages during these periods in the overall United States.

Table 42
Changes in the Annual Earnings of Workers in the United States
1999 to 2019
Year-Round, Full-Time Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Average Annual Earnings		
	1999	2009	2019
Dominican	\$38,685	\$40,976	\$46,325
United States Overall	\$57,851	\$60,678	\$64,620
	Average Annual Growth Rate (%)		
	1999-2009	2009-2019	
Dominican	0.6%	1.3%	
United States Overall	0.5%	0.6%	

The data for 2009 and 1999 has been adjusted for inflation and expressed into \$2009 \$.

Source: 2000 U.S. Census of Population 5% PUMS; 2019 and 2009 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

As with unemployment rates, there are a variety of forces influencing earnings, including age (experience), immigrant status, English proficiency, disability status, etc. But key among these variables are age and educational attainment.

The age structure of a population makes a significant difference in terms of salaries: except for the very old, as workers age, their labor market experience is rewarded with increased earnings. As a result, if the average age of a group is lower, as in the case of Dominicans, its average income may also be lower. Table 43 presents the overall link between age and earnings for year-round, full-time workers in the United States. The annual wages and salaries of full-time workers shown in this table rise sharply with age. For the labor force aged 16 to 19 years of age, annual earnings in 2019 were equal to \$21,281. This rises to \$30,552 for workers aged 20 to 24. For the age group 25 to 34, earnings increase to \$52,000, and so on for older age groups. Only when workers reach the 55 to 64 years of age bracket does their income decline, compared to younger cohorts. Among Dominicans, the same age-earnings profile holds, with average annual earnings more than doubling on average, from \$21,396 to \$44,518, between the 16 to 19 age group and the 25 to 34 age cohort. But among Dominicans, the older age groups tend to fall in earnings at a younger age, with the highest average earnings reached at the 35 to 44 age group, with \$51,660, and average earnings falling for older cohorts, equal to \$50,169 for the 45 to 54 age group and to \$43,402 for the 55 to 64 age range.

Table 43
The Annual Earnings of Workers by Age Group, 2019
Year-Round, Full-Time Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Age Group	Average Annual Earnings	
	United States	Dominican
16 to 19	\$21,281	\$21,396
20 to 24	\$30,552	\$29,454
25 to 34	\$52,000	\$44,518
35 to 44	\$70,986	\$51,660
45 to 54	\$76,135	\$50,169
55 to 64	\$74,669	\$43,902

Source: 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

The Dominican population is relatively young. As a result, it has a much higher share of young workers. This partly explains the lower Dominican earnings established earlier.

But the most critical variable explaining earnings is educational attainment. There is a strong positive correlation between earnings and schooling. Higher educational attainment raises worker productivity and leads to increased wages. Education is also used by employers as a screening device, with less-educated workers out-ranked by more-educated workers in the rationing of entry-level jobs and higher-paying promotions. This is illustrated by Table 44, which shows the annual wage and salary income of full-time, year-round workers in the United States in 2019. The average earnings of workers with no high school diploma were equal to \$35,766. But those with a high school diploma had average annual earnings of \$44,136. For workers with some college education, but not a four-year college diploma, the annual earnings rise to \$52,031 and for those with a college degree, average income increases to \$93,523. Dominicans do also have significantly positive rates of return to education, but they are lower than for the overall United States. Table 44 shows that, among Dominicans, annual earnings rise from an average of \$35,550 for those with less than a high school education, to \$37,381 for persons with a high school diploma, \$42,713 for those with some college, and \$65,771 for college graduates.

Table 44
The Rate of Return to Education
Annual Earnings, By Educational Attainment Group
Average for 2018 and 2019*
Year-Round, Full-Time Employed persons 16 years of age or older

Age Group	Average Annual Earnings	
	United States	Dominican
Less than High School	\$35,756	\$35,550
High School	\$44,136	\$37,381
Some College	\$52,031	\$42,773
College	\$93,523	\$65,771

* Data for 2018 has been adjusted for inflation and expressed in 2019 \$,

Source: 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

Given the critical importance of education –particularly completing a college education-- in determining earnings, the next section examines the educational attainment of Dominicans.

THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF THE DOMINICAN POPULATION

This section presents the educational outcomes of the Dominican population in the United States in 2019, compared to the overall population of the country. The data are for persons 25 years of age or older and it shows the percentage of persons who had completed various levels of schooling, including: (1) persons who had not received a high school diploma or equivalency, so they had elementary school, middle school or perhaps up to 11 or 12 years of schooling but no high school diploma, (2) those with a high school diploma or diploma, but had not completed a year of college, (3) those with some college education (completing either one or two years of college or an associate degree), and (4) those with a college degree or more (master's, doctoral, etc.).

Overall Educational Attainment

Table 45 shows that the Dominicans population has lower educational attainment than the overall U.S. population. The proportion of Dominicans 25 years of age or older who had less than a high school degree or equivalent in 2019 was 22.6 percent, compared to 9.6 percent in the overall population. Those who had a high school degree (diploma or through equivalency) but had not completed a year of college or beyond, were 37.1 percent among Dominicans, compared to 34.8 percent in the overall population. Regarding college education, 20.7 percent of Dominicans had completed some years of college but not a college degree, compared to 22.4 percent in the overall population. And, finally, persons with a college degree (or more) accounted for 19.6 percent of the Dominican population, relative to 33.2 percent for the overall United States.

Table 45
The Educational Status of the US Population
Persons 25 years of age or older, 2019

Population Group	Percent of the Population With:			
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominicans in the United States	22.6%	37.1%	20.7%	19.6%
United States Overall	9.6%	34.8%	22.4%	33.2%
Non-Hispanic White	5.3%	34.9%	22.9%	36.9%
Non-Hispanic Black	10.4%	40.4%	26.5%	22.7%
Non-Hispanic Asian	9.7%	20.3%	15.0%	55.0%
Hispanic/Latino	26.1%	36.7%	19.6%	17.6%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

But the educational attainment of Dominicans now surpasses that of the overall Hispanic/Latino population. For example, in 2019, the percentage of Dominicans who had completed some college (but not a college degree) was 20.7 percent of the total population aged 25 year of age or older, and those who had a college degree were 19.6 percent, adding up to 40.3 percent who had some college education or more. Among Hispanics/Latinos in general, the equivalent proportions were 19.6 percent, 17.6 percent, and 37.2 percent.

Educational attainment varies by gender. In fact, in 2019, women had slightly higher educational attainment than men, among both Dominicans and the population in general. Table 46 shows the distribution of educational attainment of persons 25 years of age or older decomposed by gender. Among Dominicans, 21.2 percent of women had a college degree and an additional 21.6 percent had completed some college education (without a college degree), totaling 41.8 percent. By comparison, 17.6 percent of Dominican men had a college degree and 19.4 percent had completed some college education, adding up to 37 percent. The gap in educational attainment by gender is also reflected in the general U.S. population. As Table 46 reports, among women, 34 percent had completed college in 2019 and 23.2 percent had completed some college education, adding up to 57.2 percent. For men, the corresponding figures were 32.3 percent with a college degree and 25.5 percent with some college, adding up to 53.8 percent.

Table 46
The Educational Status of the US Population, 2019
By Gender
Persons 25 years of age or older

Population Group	Percent of the Population With:			
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominican				
Male	21.8%	41.2%	19.4%	17.6%
Female	23.1%	34.1%	21.6%	21.2%
United States Overall				
Male	10.0%	36.2%	21.5%	32.3%
Female	9.1%	33.7%	23.2%	34.0%
Hispanics in the United States overall				
Male	26.9%	38.5%	18.6%	16.0%
Female	25.3%	34.9%	20.6%	19.2%

Source: 2019 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations

Although the educational attainment of the Dominican population remains below that of the overall U.S. population, there has been a remarkable increase over time. Table 47 displays the changes over time in the proportion of the population with 25 years of age or older with a college degree (or more) for Dominicans and for the overall American population. Among Dominican women, the proportion who had completed college rose from 6.9 percent in 1990 to 21.2 percent in 2019. For men, the proportion rose from 8.9 percent in 1990 to 17.6 percent in 2019. Of course, this is a pattern among the overall population, with females having a college degree rising from 17.6 percent of the population in 1990 to 34 percent in 2019, and male college graduates rising from 23.3 percent in 1990 to 32.3 percent in 2019.

Table 47
College Educational Attainment of the US Population, 1990-2019
By Gender
Persons 25 years of age or older

Year	% With a College Degree or More					
	Dominicans		United States		Hispanics/Latinos	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2019	17.6%	21.2%	32.3%	34.0%	16.0%	19.2%
2010	14.4%	15.5%	28.5%	27.9%	12.0%	14.3%
2000	10.4%	10.6%	26.1%	22.8%	10.1%	10.8%

Source: 2019, 2010 American Community Survey PUMS and 1990 and 1980 US Census PUMS ; authors' tabulations.

Educational disparities are magnified in New York City, where the gap between Dominicans and the overall population are significantly greater than in the overall United States. Because of issues relating to sample sizes, Table 48 calculates educational attainment as an average for the years 2015-2019. During this period, the proportion of women with a college degree in New York City was 16.9 percent for Dominicans, while it was 38.6 percent for female New Yorkers in general. Among Dominican men, the proportion with a college degree in 2015-2019 was 14.3 percent while it was 37.2 percent for male New Yorkers.

Table 48
College Educational Attainment of the Dominican Population in New York City, 1990-2019
By Gender
Persons 25 years of age or older

Year	% With a College Degree or More			
	Dominican New Yorkers Male	Dominican New Yorkers Female	New York City Overall Male	New York City Overall Female
2015-2019	14.3%	16.9%	37.2%	38.6%
2006-2010	12.2%	13.2%	33.2%	32.8%
2000	7.8%	8.8%	29.0%	26.3%
1990	7.1%	5.6%	25.7%	20.7%

Source: 2018, 2019, 2009, 2010 American Community Survey PUMS and 1990 and 1980 US Census PUMS ; authors' tabulations.

At the same time, Table 48 also shows that there has been a substantial growth of educational attainment among Dominican New Yorkers over time. For Dominican women, the rise in the proportion with a college degree in New York City rose from a very low 5.6 percent in 1990 to 16.9 percent in 2019. Among Dominican men, the proportion rises from 7.1 percent in 1990 to 14.3 percent in 2019. These reflect a general increase of educational attainment in the city, as portrayed in Table 48.

U.S.-Born versus Foreign-Born Dominicans

Although the data presented so far shows that educational attainment among Dominicans remains significantly below that of the overall U.S. population, there is an essential distinction to make. As documented earlier, the Dominican population includes a continuous inflow of immigrants, which remains to the present. This makes a great difference in calculating educational attainment.

Table 49 fleshes out the differences in the educational attainment of Dominican immigrants (born outside the U.S.) and Dominicans born in the U.S. It shows that although the immigrant Dominican community has relatively low levels of schooling, this is not the case with U.S.-born Dominicans. In fact, Dominicans born in the United States now equal or surpass the educational attainment of the overall U.S. population.

Table 49 presents an average of the educational attainment of Dominicans and the U.S. population for the period of 2015 to 2019 (small sample sizes in the ACS prevent a yearly decomposition). As before, it includes the population 25 years of age or older.

Consider first the Dominican population born in the U.S. As can be seen, as much as 34.6 percent of U.S.-born Dominican women had a college degree and 31.6 percent had completed some college education (but not a college degree), which adds up to 66.2 percent with some college or more levels of education. For women in the U.S., the equivalent proportions are 32.5 percent for college graduates and 23.5 for those with some college, which adds up to 56 percent, significantly below the proportions for Dominican women. For U.S.-born Dominican men, 23 percent had a college degree and 29.2 percent had completed some college education (but not a college degree), adding up to 52.2 percent with some college education or more. For the U.S. male population overall, 31.4 percent had received a college degree and 21.8 percent had some college education (but not completed a college degree), which sums to 53.2 percent with some college education or more. This is approximately the same as for U.S.-born Dominican men.

Table 49
The Educational Status of the Dominican Population, 2015-2019
US-Born versus Immigrants
Persons 25 years of age or older

Population Group	Percent of the Population With:			
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominican US-Born				
Male	10.2%	37.6%	29.2%	23.0%
Female	6.9%	26.9%	31.6%	34.6%
Dominican Immigrants				
Male	29.4%	38.1%	17.8%	14.7%
Female	29.7%	34.1%	19.7%	16.5%
United States Overall				
Male	10.7%	36.1%	21.8%	31.4%
Female	9.7%	34.3%	23.5%	32.5%

Source: 2019-2015 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

The situation is very different for foreign-born Dominicans. For this population, 16.5 percent of women had a college degree and 19.7 percent had some college education (but not a degree), which adds up to 36.2 percent with some college education, sharply below the 66.2 percent for U.S.-born Dominican women. The same gap exists among Dominican men. For the latter, 14.7 percent of the foreign-born population had completed college and 17.8 percent had completed some college, summing to 32.5 percent, way below the 53.2 percent for U.S.-born Dominican men.

U.S.-born Dominicans also have significantly greater educational attainment than U.S.-born Hispanics in general. As Table 50 depicts, among the latter, in 2019, 25.5 percent of men had completed some college and 18.3 percent had a college degree, summing to 43.8 percent with some college or more, compared to 52.2 percent among U.S.-born Dominican men. For U.S.-born Hispanic women, the proportion who had completed some college was 28.1 percent and those with a college degree was 22.4 percent, adding to 50.5 percent with some college education or more, compared to 66.2 percent for U.S.-born Dominican women. Table 50 also shows that this result applies as well for the major Hispanic sub-groups, including Mexican Americans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Salvadoreans. U.S.-born Dominican educational attainment is only exceeded by that of the U.S.-born Cuban population.

Table 50
The Educational Status of the U.S.-Born Dominican Population, 2015-2019
By Hispanic/Latino Group
Persons 25 years of age or older

Population Group	Percent of the Population With:			
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominican U.S.-Born				
Male	10.2%	37.6%	29.2%	23.0%
Female	6.9%	26.9%	31.6%	34.6%
Hispanic U.S.-Born				
Male	13.8%	42.4%	25.5%	18.3%
Female	12.5%	37.0%	28.1%	22.4%
Mexican U.S.-Born				
Male	14.9%	44.5%	25.1%	15.5%
Female	13.9%	39.0%	27.9%	19.2%
Puerto Rican U.S.-Born				
Male	12.5%	44.2%	25.4%	17.9%
Female	10.5%	36.6%	29.4%	23.5%
Salvadorean U.S.-Born				
Male	12.6%	38.2%	29.1%	20.1%
Female	10.7%	29.3%	32.4%	27.6%
Cuban U.S.-Born				
Male	6.9%	31.0%	25.8%	36.3%
Female	4.9%	29.8%	25.9%	44.4%

Source: 2019-2015 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

The differences in educational attainment between U.S.-born and foreign-born Dominicans hold as well in New York City. Table 51 presents these differences. Consider the U.S.-born first. As much as 31.8 percent of U.S.-born Dominican women in New York City had completed a college degree and 32.2 percent had completed some college education (but not a college degree), which adds up to 64 percent with some college education. By comparison, 38.6 percent of the New York City female population had a college degree and 16.6 percent had some college education (but not a college degree), which sums to 55.2 percent, significantly lower than the equivalent for U.S.-born Dominican women. Among U.S.-born men, 20.8 percent had completed college and 26.5 percent had some college education (but not a college degree), adding up to 47.3 percent. In New York City overall, 37.2 percent of men had completed college and 16.3 percent had completed some college education (but not a degree), with sums to 53.5 percent, which is somewhat above the equivalent for U.S.-born Dominican men.

Table 51
The Educational Status of the Dominican Population in New York City, 2015-2019
US-Born versus Immigrants
Persons 25 years of age or older

Population Group	Percent of the Population With:			
	Less than High School	High School	Some College	College or More
Dominican US-Born				
Male	14.1%	38.6%	26.5%	20.8%
Female	8.6%	27.4%	32.2%	31.8%
Dominican Immigrants				
Male	34.7%	36.8%	16.0%	12.5%
Female	36.0%	31.5%	18.5%	14.0%
New York City Overall				
Male	14.9%	31.6%	16.3%	37.2%
Female	15.5%	29.4%	16.6%	38.6%
U.S.-Born Hispanics Overall				
Male	14.5%	38.7%	23.7%	23.1%
Female	12.8%	31.1%	26.1%	30.0%

Source: 2019-2015 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

On the other hand, as Table 51 shows, both foreign-born Dominican women and men have substantially lower educational attainment. Among women, 14 percent had a college degree and 18.5 percent had some college education (but not a degree), adding up to 32.5 percent, as compared to 64 percent among U.S.-born Dominican women. For foreign born Dominican men, only 12.5 percent had a college degree and 16 percent had some college education (but no college degree), which sums to 28.5 percent, sharply below the equivalent for U.S.-born Dominican men, which was equal to 47.3 percent.

Enrollment Rates

The last section showed educational attainment data for the adult population aged 25 years of age or older. This section discusses the enrollment rates in school of the youth population, aged 15 to 21. The group of persons aged 15 to 17 are generally presumed to be in high school while the age group 18 to 21 may still be in high school, but many would be expected to be in college.

Table 52 shows the average enrollment rates of Dominican men and women and those for the overall United States in the period of 2015-2019. For the age group 15 to 17, about 97 percent of Dominican men and 98 percent of Dominican women were enrolled in school. These are about the same or slightly higher than the equivalent proportions for the overall U.S. population as well as the overall Hispanic population in the country.

Table 52
School/College Enrollment Rates, 2015-2019
Dominican Youth in the United States

% of Persons in the Age Group Enrolled in a School or College		
	Male	Female
	Dominican Youth	
Aged 15 to 17	97.0%	97.6%
Aged 18 to 21	61.8%	71.1%
	United States Youth	
Aged 15 to 17	96.6%	97.0%
Aged 18 to 21	61.2%	69.6%
	Hispanic Youth	
Aged 15 to 17	96.1%	97.0%
Aged 18 to 21	54.7%	63.8%

Source: 2019-2015 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

In the 18 to 21 age range, Dominicans surpass the U.S. population in terms of enrollment rates. Among Dominican women aged 18 to 21, as much as 71.1 percent were enrolled in school or universities while the equivalent for the overall U.S. population was 69.6 percent and among Hispanics it was 63.8 percent. For men, Dominicans aged 18 to 21 had an enrollment rate of 61.8 percent while U.S. men overall in that age range had a 61.2 percent enrollment rate; among Hispanic men aged 18 to 21 the enrollment rate was substantially lower, equal to 54.7 percent.

The enrollment rates of U.S.-born Dominicans are even more impressive. For instance, for U.S.-born Dominican women aged 18 to 21, as much as 72.4 percent in the period 2015 to 2019 were enrolled in a school or university while the equivalent for U.S.-born Hispanic women in general was 65.2 percent. For U.S.-born Dominican men aged 18 to 21, the enrollment rate in schools or universities was 63.1 percent, substantially higher than for U.S.-born Hispanic men in the same age range, which was 55 percent. Indeed, Dominican enrollment rates significantly exceed those of the other major Hispanic groups --such as Mexican Americans/Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Salvadoreans—except for Cuban youth.

Table 53
School/College Enrollment Rates of U.S.-Born Youth, 2015-2019
Hispanic Groups Aged 18 to 21 in the United States

	% of Persons in the Age Group Enrolled in a School or College	
	Male	Female
U.S.-Born Dominicans	63.3%	72.4%
Hispanics/Latinos U.S.-born	55.7%	65.3%
Mexican U.S.-born	53.5%	63.0%
Puerto Rican U.S.-born	52.9%	61.1%
Salvadorean U.S.-born	58.1%	70.2%
Cuban U.S.-born	70.1%	79.0%

Source: 2019-2015 American Community Survey PUMS; authors' tabulations.

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The discussion in this report so far has focused mostly on the period up to the end of 2019. As we all witnessed, on February 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic began a full-fledge assault on the United States and the world, leading to a global social and economic crisis that continues to have repercussions to this day. The pandemic affected not only our personal lives, health, and economic conditions but it also influenced the data collection activities that are the source of information presented in this study. The American Community Survey (ACS), the main annual source of data on the socioeconomic status of the population, had difficulties in its sampling activities in 2020 and the results of that survey were delayed until late in 2021 due to these problems. Because some populations were harder to reach during the pandemic, the Bureau of the Census acknowledges that the data collected in 2020 over-represented the population that was more educated, had higher incomes, and lived in single-family housing units [U.S. Bureau of the Census (2021)]. They did adjust for the undercounts, utilizing experimental weights to correct the bias, but they warned that estimates based on the 2020 ACS are potentially less reliable than those for earlier years. This report has not relied so far on the 2020 ACS, except when supplemented with additional data sources, such as the 2020 U.S. Census.

Besides the ACS, the second major source of socioeconomic information in the United States is the Current Population Survey (CPS), which surveys the American population monthly. It is the CPS that provides the monthly figures on employment and unemployment that are followed so avidly by the press, politicians, etc. The CPS, however, has significantly smaller samples of the population relative to the ACS. It also differs from the ACS in that it is based on phone interviews directly (using computer randomization) with follow-up personal interviews while the ACS uses a self-reported mail-out, mail-back questionnaire with an internet option. Both surveys, however, were subject to higher non-response rates during the pandemic period in 2020 and 2021, compared to earlier periods.

This section uses data provided by the ACS and CPS to examine unemployment—but it must be emphasized that the results are exploratory and subject to a margin of error that is greater than the results presented in previous sections.¹⁶

¹⁶ Both the 2020 ACS and the 2020-2021 CPS data are from the IPUMS; see Ruggles et. al. (2021).

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the unemployment rate of the Dominican population? Table 54 presents the average unemployment rate among Dominicans and for the U.S. population in general for the calendar years of 2019 and 2020. As can be seen, the pandemic was associated with a substantial increase of unemployment for both Dominicans and the overall U.S. workforce. Dominican workers had an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent in 2019 and this rose to 11.8 percent in 2020. For the United States overall, the rise of unemployment was from 4.5 percent in 2019 to 6.7 percent in 2020.

Table 54
Unemployment Rates, United States, 2019 and 2020
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	2019	2020
Dominican Population	6.5%	11.8%
United States Overall	4.5%	6.5%
Non-Hispanic White Population	3.7%	5.7%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	7.8%	10.5%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	3.5%	5.7%
Hispanic/Latino Population	7.4%	8.3%

Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2020; authors' tabulations.

The rise in unemployment just noted was magnified in New York City, which was more severely affected by the pandemic. Table 53 shows the changes in unemployment in New York City between the calendar years of 2019 to 2020. For Dominicans, the unemployment rate went up from 6.6 percent in 2019 to 14.3 percent in 2020. For the city overall, unemployment rose from 5.3 percent in 2019 to 9.9 percent in 2020. Both changes were significantly bigger than those in the rest of the nation.

Table 55
Unemployment Rates, New York City, 2019 and 2020
Persons 16 years of age or older

Population Group	Unemployment Rate (%)	
	2019	2020
Dominican Population	8.6%	14.3%
New York City Overall	5.3%	9.9%
Non-Hispanic White Population	3.4%	7.8%
Non-Hispanic Black Population	7.1%	11.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian Population	4.4%	8.2%
Hispanic/Latino Population	6.6%	12.4%

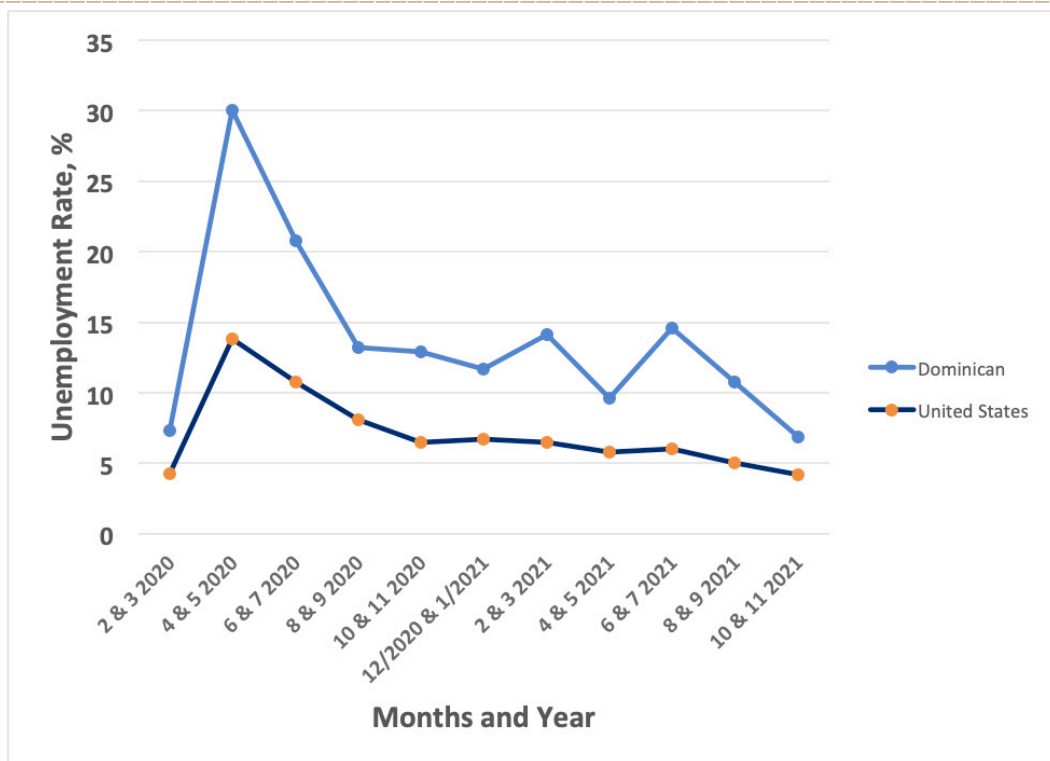
Source: American Community Survey PUMS for 2019 and 2020; authors' tabulations.

The changes in unemployment reported in Tables 54 and 55 are averages for each calendar year. For 2020, this includes the early months of the year --January and February--when the pandemic had not hit with full force yet, and it also includes the last few months of the year, by which time the economic impact of the pandemic had diminished. To show the short-run impact of the pandemic in 2020, one needs to look at monthly unemployment rates. Estimates of monthly unemployment rates are provided by the Current Population Survey (CPS). As mentioned earlier, the CPS is the key monthly labor market monitoring survey in the U.S. and the Bureau of the Census has provided careful analysis of monthly unemployment rates over the years.¹⁷

¹⁷ The pandemic, however, did create some challenges. Initially, when the pandemic hit in February and March many workers who were absent from work due to the pandemic were considered by interviewers to still be employed, not unemployed. In the past, persons who declared they had a job but were absent from work at the time of interview were assumed to be workers that because of sick leave or personal illness would return quickly to their jobs and therefore were not considered to be unemployed. However, the reality is that persons absent from work due to pandemic-related business closures or cutbacks are not just out sick or out of their jobs for a few days and they should be considered to be unemployed (on temporary layoff). The Bureau of the Census recognized this problem and after March 2020 it did instruct interviewers to change their categorization of these workers from employed to unemployed.

Figure 2 presents the bi-monthly changes in unemployment in the United States overall and among Dominicans in the period of February 2020 to November 2021. It displays in full view the devastating short-run impact of the pandemic on the unemployment of both Dominicans and the overall population of the country. For Dominicans, from an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent overall in 2019, unemployment rose to 7.3 percent on average for the months of February and March 2020 and climbing to a whopping 30 percent in June and July 2020. The overall unemployment rate in the U.S. also rose sharply, although not as much as among the Dominican population, tripling from an average of 4.5 percent in 2019 to 13.8 percent in April and May of 2020. Since then, unemployment rates have gradually declined. For Dominicans, the unemployment rate dropped from 20.8 percent in June and July of 2020 to 6.9 percent in October and November of 2021, while for the country overall the reduction was from 10.8 percent in June and July of 2020 to 4.2 percent in October and November of 2021. Note that this has not been a continuous reduction, as the various waves of the pandemic did raise unemployment rates back up at various times during this period.

Figure 2.
Unemployment Rates, February 2020- November 2021



Source: Current Population Survey, 2020-2021 PUMS.

The effects of the pandemic on other variables, such as the per-capita income and poverty of Dominicans and the overall U.S. population are more difficult to determine at this point due to the data collection issues mentioned earlier. However, exploratory analysis of the existing data suggests that the pandemic may not have had the sustained negative impact on poverty that many expected based on its cataclysmic effects in April through August of 2020. In fact, some research suggests that poverty may have even declined in late 2020 and 2021 [see Giannarelli et. al. (2020) and Wheaton et. al. (2021)]. These results can be explained in part by the resilience of the U.S. economy during the pandemic and the relatively quick rebound of employment, as was just shown. In fact, many sectors of the economy, employing both skilled and unskilled workers, were facing labor shortages by the end of 2021. But more important was perhaps the effect of the

massive expansion of government programs and tax breaks that helped individuals and families with low income navigate the pandemic. These include the extension of unemployment insurance, the increased child tax credit, the strengthened food stamp program, and the earned income tax credit, among others, as well as several rounds of federal and state stimulus payments. However, many of these government programs were temporary and although there is legislation seeking to extend some of them, it is unlikely that they will continue. Combined with a rebirth of inflation, it gives rise to the question of whether any reductions in poverty during the pandemic will be reversed in years to come.

CONCLUSIONS

This report presents a mixed, but overall promising picture of the Dominican population of the United States. On the one hand, Dominicans have among the lowest per-capita income levels in the country. They also have comparatively high poverty rates, particularly among older persons, female-headed households, and children. On the other hand, many Dominican income and labor force indicators have improved substantially over the last two decades. For instance, the poverty rate among Dominicans declined from over 27 percent in 1999 all the way down to 19 percent in 2019. By contrast, the overall poverty rate in the country did not change that much during the period, staying at approximately 12.4 percent. And the poverty rate of Dominican children dropped from 33.3 percent in 2009 to 23.3 percent in 2019. This precipitous decline in poverty rates among Dominicans is the largest of any of the various racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Similarly, for both men and women, labor force participation rates among Dominicans have risen sharply over the last two decades and are now significantly above those for the overall population of the United States.

Even more significantly, the Dominican second and third generations appear to be investing heavily in the accumulation of human capital, increasing their educational attainment, and sustaining comparatively high school and college enrollment rates. In fact, U.S.-born Dominicans now equal or surpass the overall U.S. population in educational attainment. For women, as much as 66.2 percent of all Dominicans 25 years of age or older had completed some college education or had a college degree in 2019; for the overall female population in the U.S., the equivalent proportions were substantially lower: 56 percent. For U.S.-born Dominican men, 52.2 percent had completed some college education or had a college degree in 2019, which is about the same as the 53.2 percent for the U.S. male population overall. Enrollment rates in schools and universities among Dominicans are also now as high or higher than those for the overall youth population in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating short-run impact on Dominicans and the overall population in the country. But the resiliency of the American economy, the strong spirit of its people, and the dramatic steps taken by the government in stimulating the economy and assisting the poor have sharply ameliorated its impact.

Despite considerable challenges in the last 15 years, including a great recession and a devastating pandemic, Dominicans have displayed enormous resiliency and made substantial socioeconomic progress. The overall prospects for the future appear to us to be cautiously bright for Dominicans in the U.S.

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