



Contributions of Boston's Foreign Born 2024

June 28, 2024

Boston Planning and Development Agency, Research Division



Contributions of Boston's Foreign Born

1 Immigration: current and historical status

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2 Immigrants spur population growth

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3 Immigrants increase Boston's diversity

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4 Immigrants contribute to Boston's economy

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5 Conclusion

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Immigration is in the news, once again...

The U.S. Economy Is Surpassing Expectations. Immigration Is One Reason.

Immigrants aided the pandemic recovery and may be crucial to future needs. The challenge is processing newcomers and getting them where the jobs are.

The Economist

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Weekly edition

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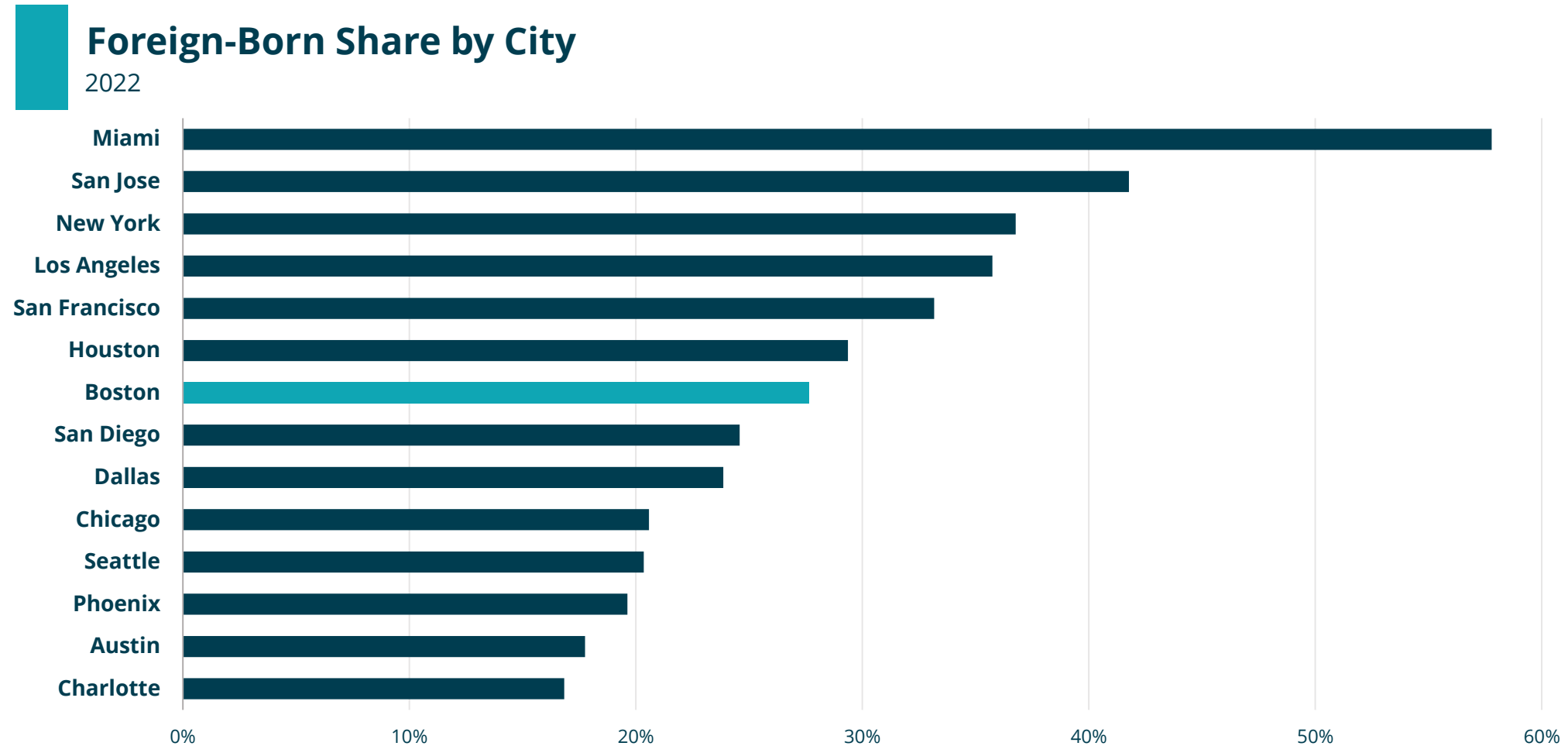
[Finance and economics](#) | Thousands are flying

Immigration is surging, with big economic consequences

The West faces an unprecedented number of new arrivals

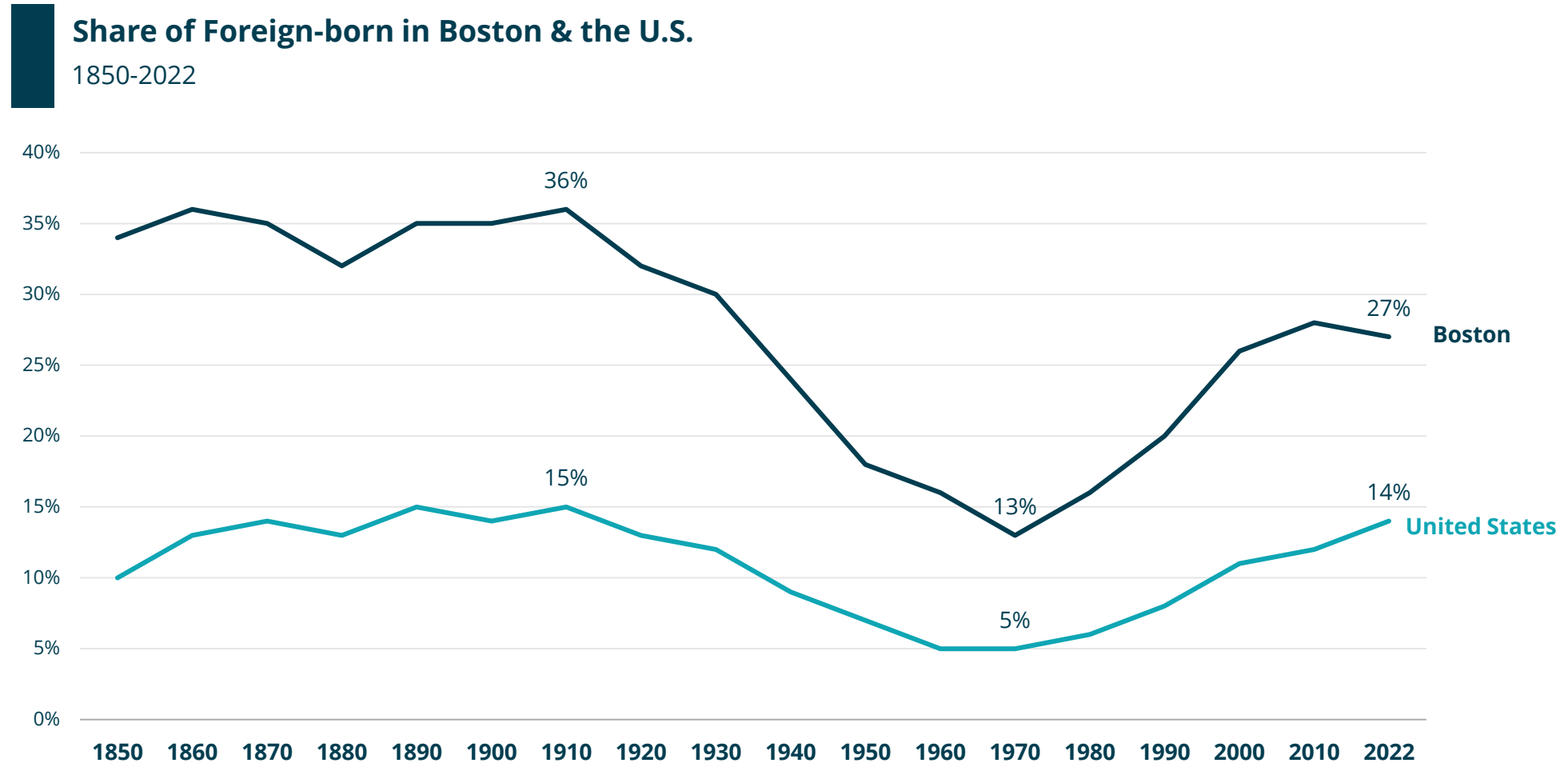


Boston ranks 7th among 15 comparable cities in its foreign-born share



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

From 1850 to 1910, more than one third of Boston's population was foreign born



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 to 2000 Decennial Census & 2010 and 2022 ACS, BPDA Research Division Analysis

US immigration policy changed the quantity and origin of immigration

Three major changes to the law, 1924-1990

Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act)

- Lower cap on immigrants per year. Establish “national origins” quotas at 2% of population in 1890, which favored Western European immigrants

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act)

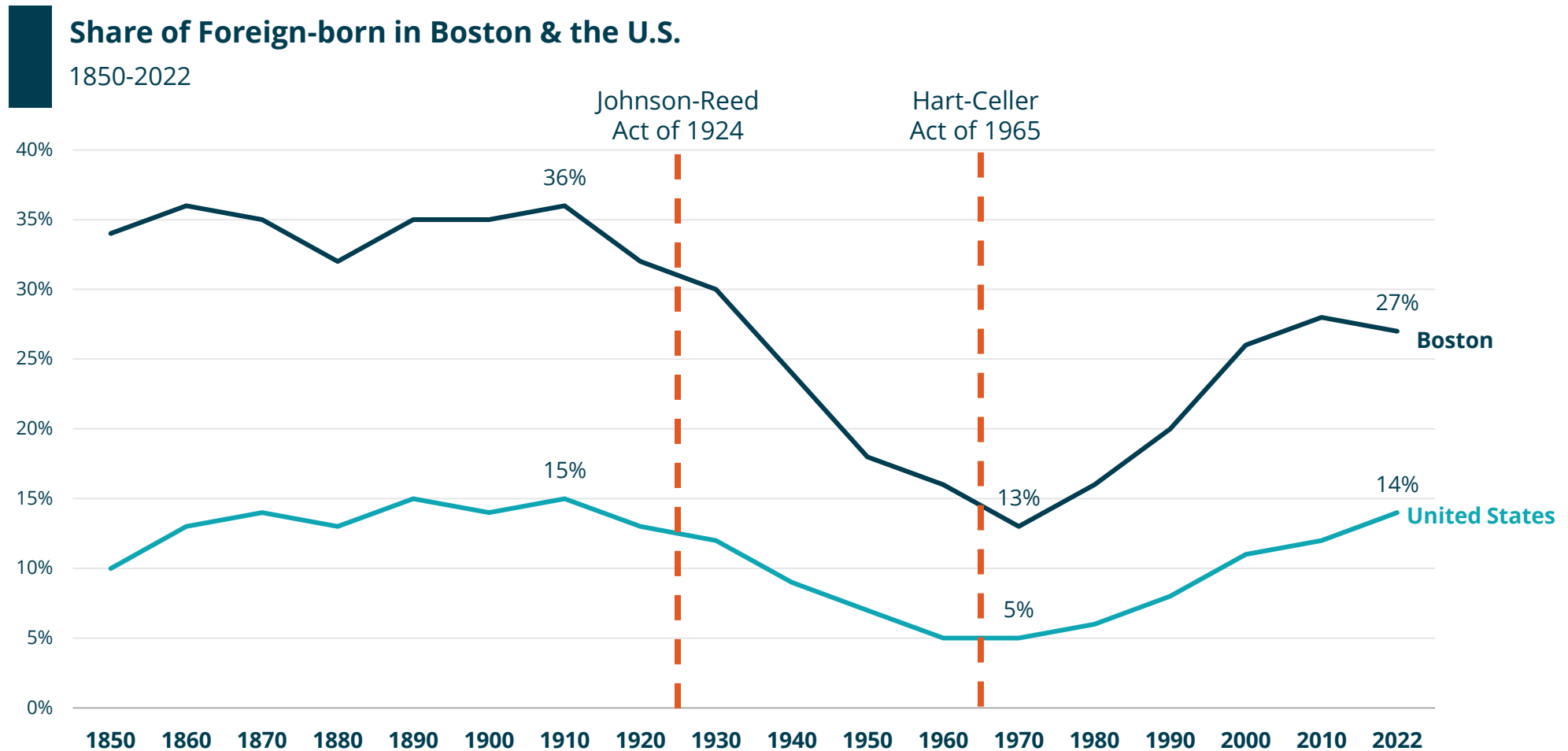
- System of preferences for family reunification (75%), employment (20%) and refugees (5%): allowed increased immigration, especially from non-European countries

Immigration Act of 1990

- Implemented the H-1B visa program for skilled temporary workers, some provisions for converting to permanent status, and a diversity lottery

Source: *Immigration History*, Migration Policy Institute.

The foreign-born share fell after the 1924 immigration restrictions and rebounded after 1965

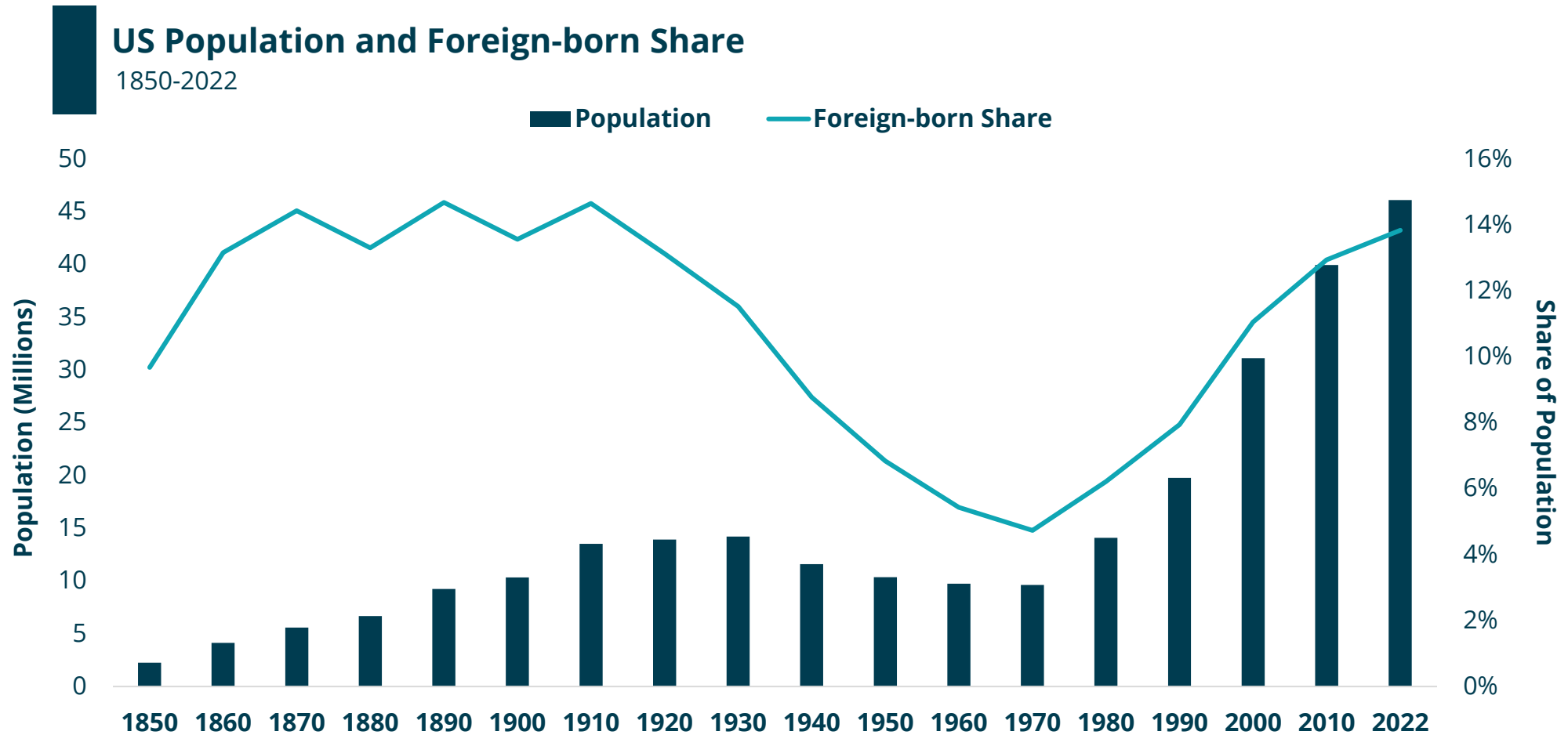


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 to 2000 Decennial Census & 2010 and 2022 ACS, BPDA Research Division Analysis

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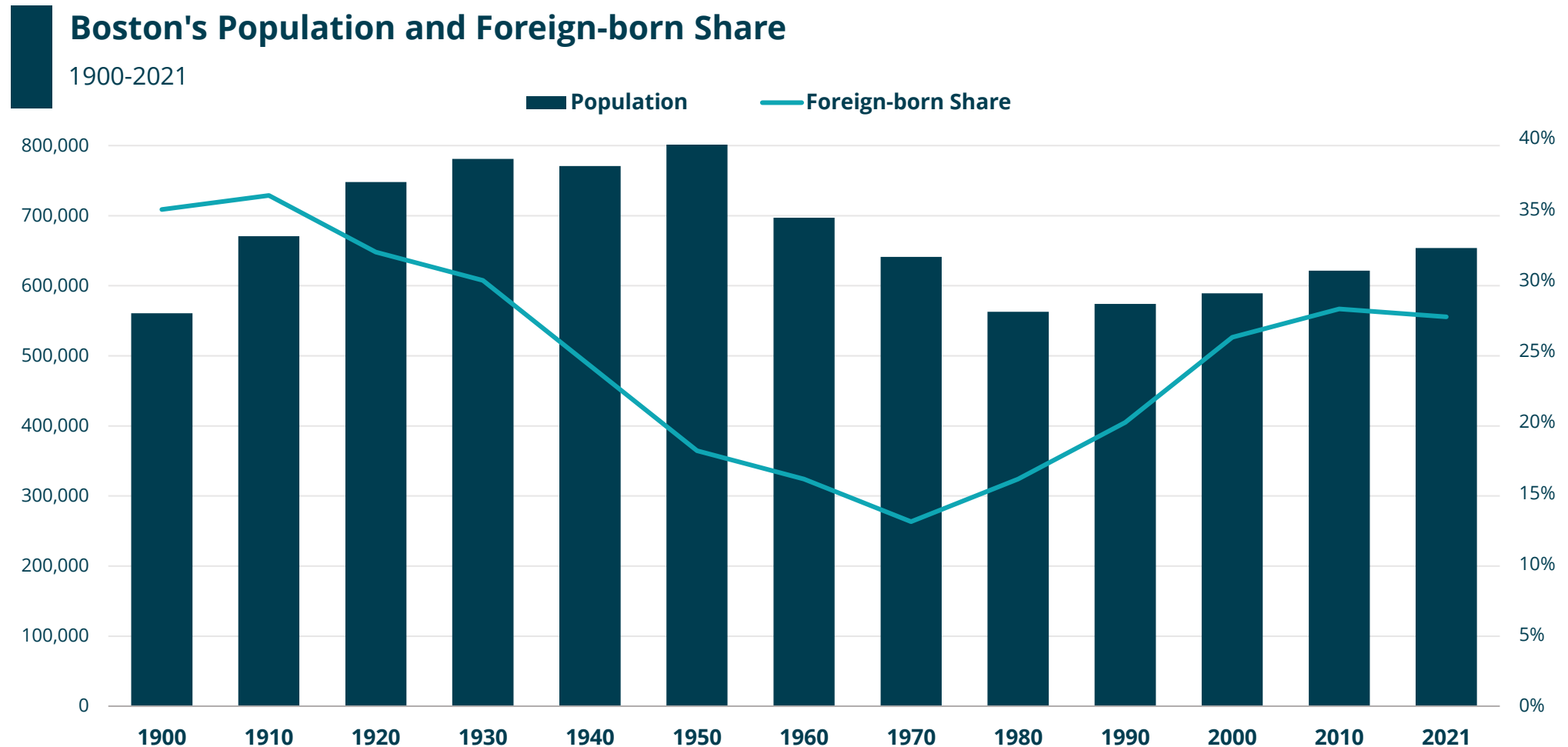
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Since the 1970s, immigration drove U.S population growth, which was otherwise decreasing due to low birth rates



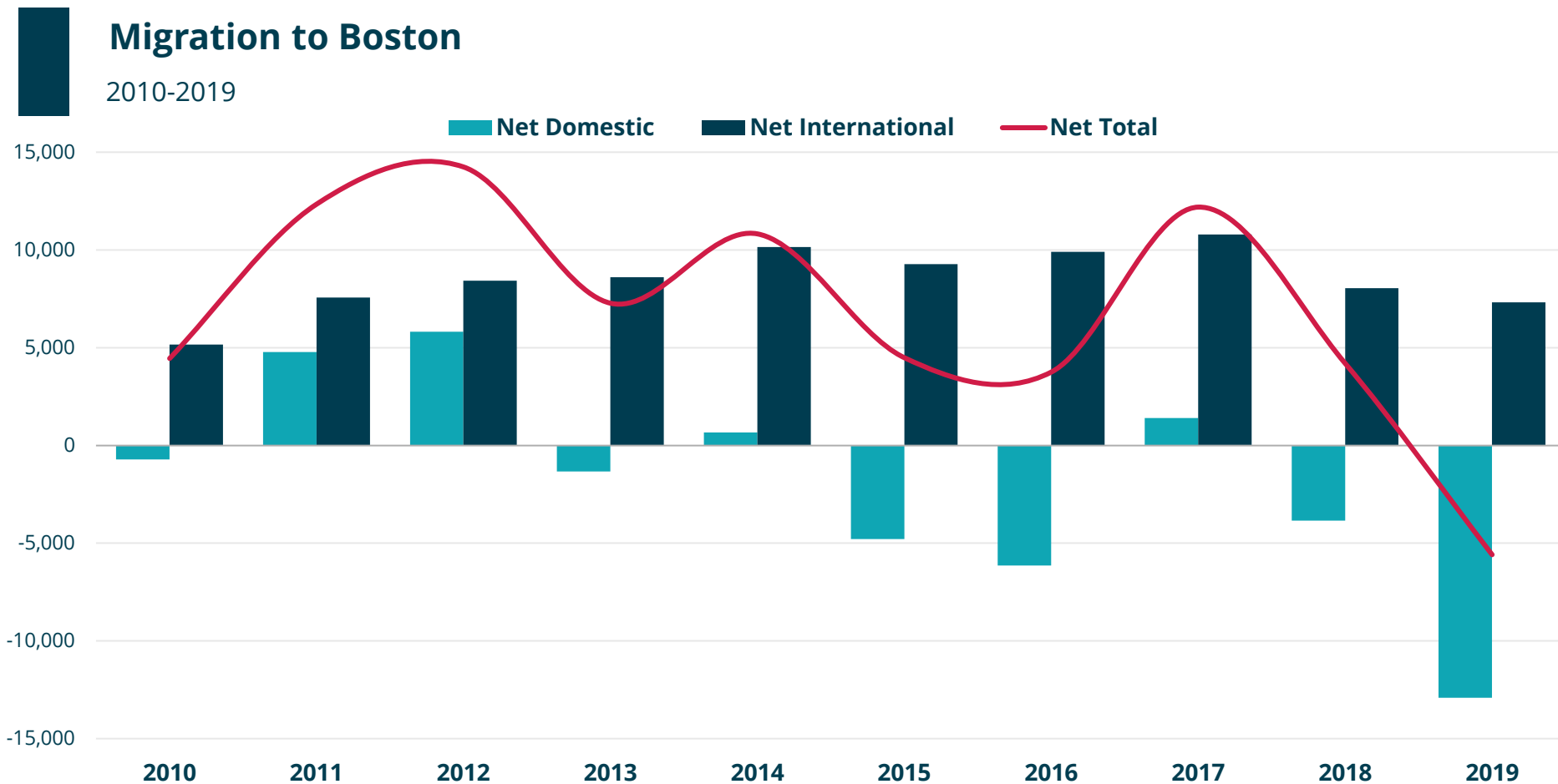
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1850 to 2000 Decennial Census & 2010 and 2022 ACS, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Increased immigration after 1970 helped Boston's population recover



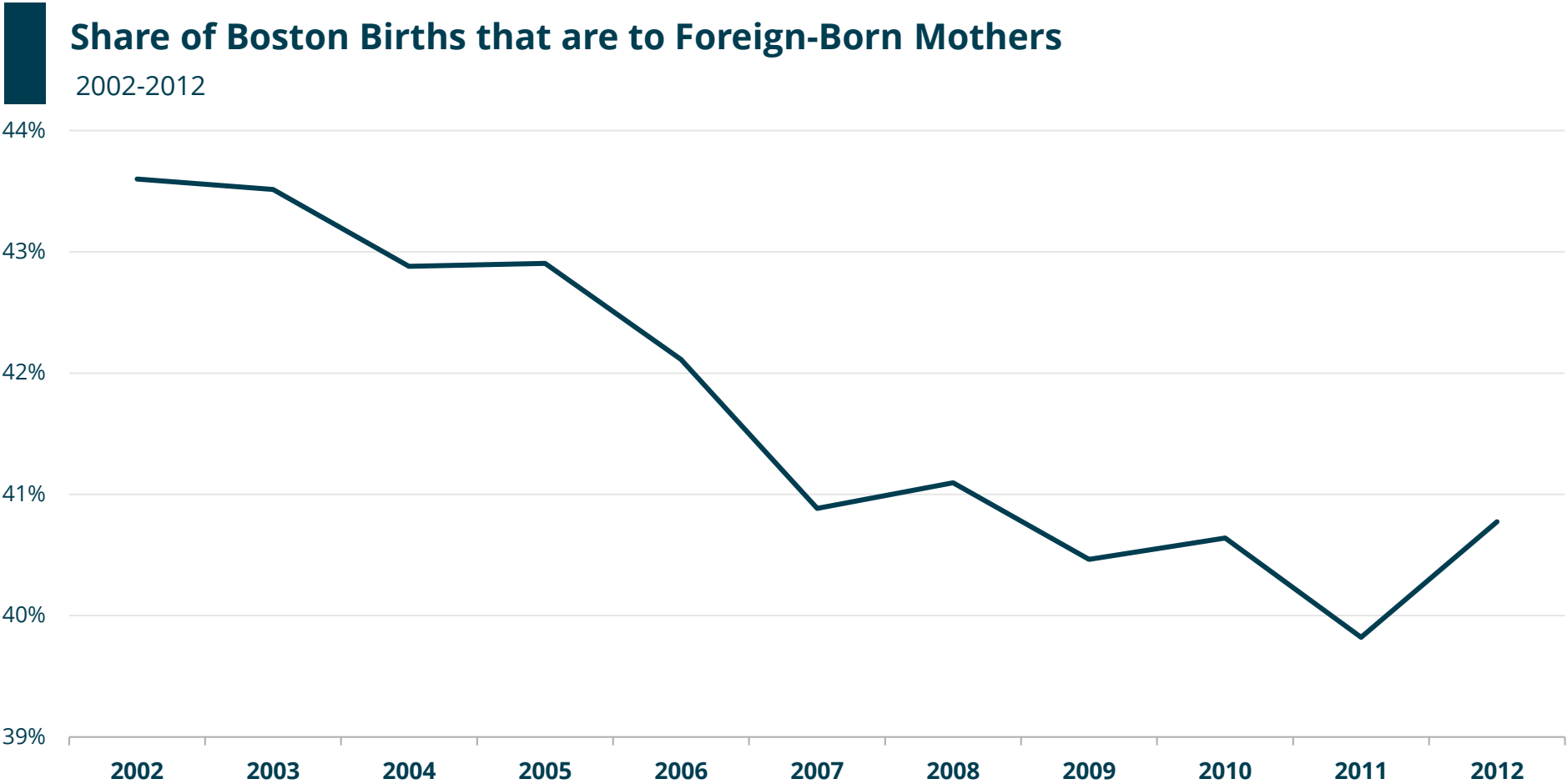
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1900 to 2000 Decennial Census & 2010 and 2021 ACS, BPDA Research Division Analysis

In the last decade domestic migration to Boston decreased, but international migration remained steady



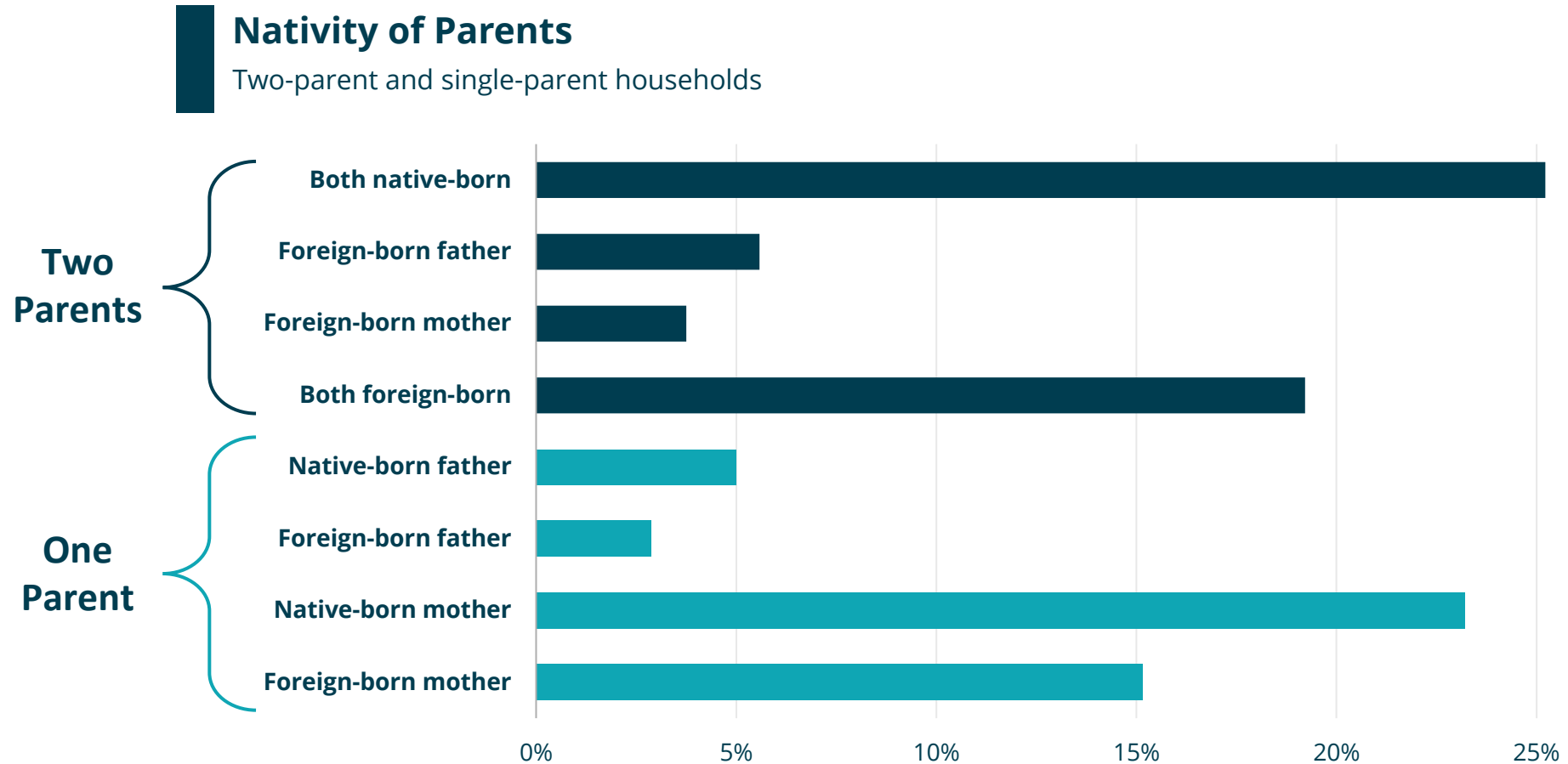
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1-Year ACS 2010-2019, BPDA Research Division Analysis

40-45% of Births in Boston were to Foreign-born Mothers Between 2002 and 2012

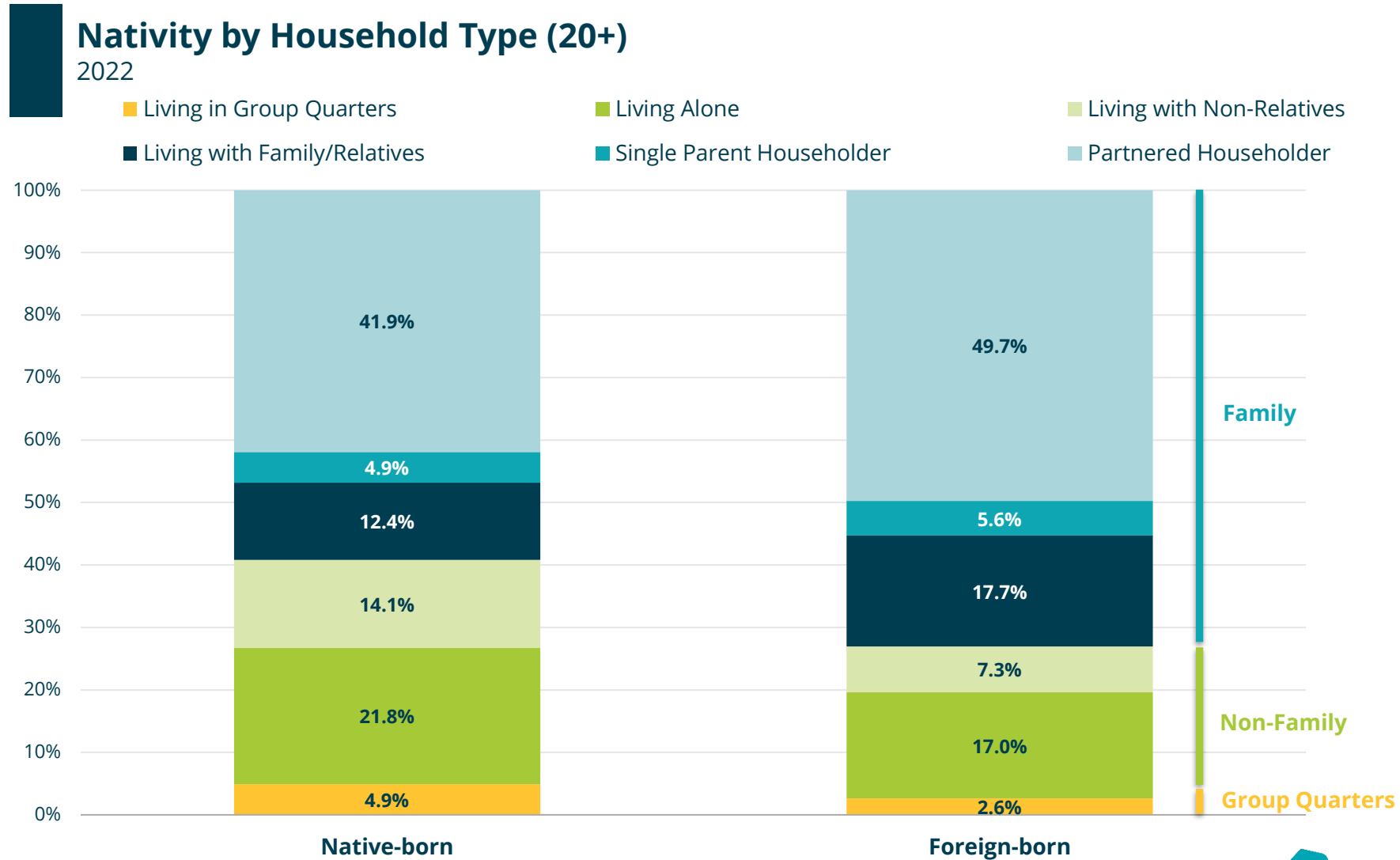


Source: Boston Public Health Commission, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Only ~5% of Boston's children are foreign born, but 47% have at least 1 foreign-born parent

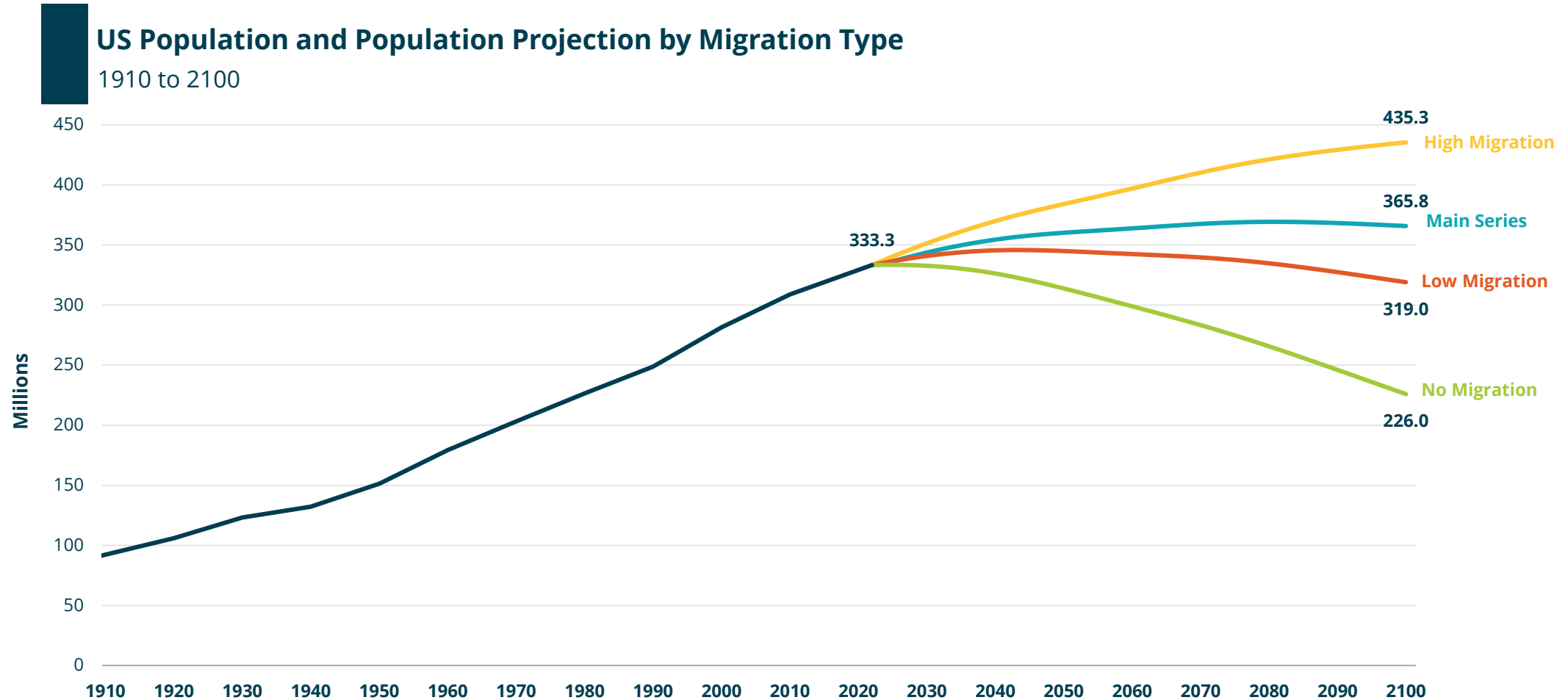


The foreign born are more likely to live in family households



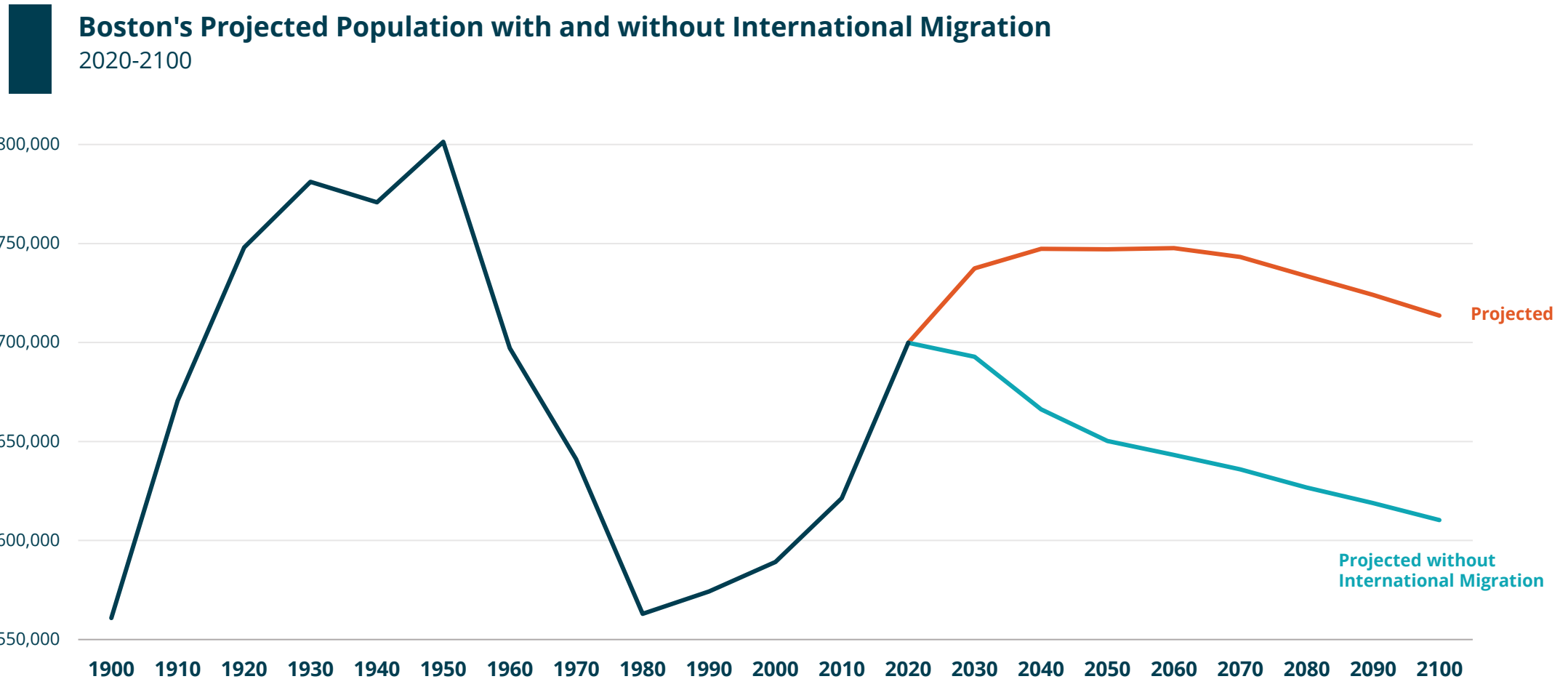
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Without immigration the US population is projected to decline almost immediately



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1900 to 2020 Decennial Census & Census 2023 Population Projections, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Without any international migration, Boston's population in 2050 would be 13% lower than otherwise projected



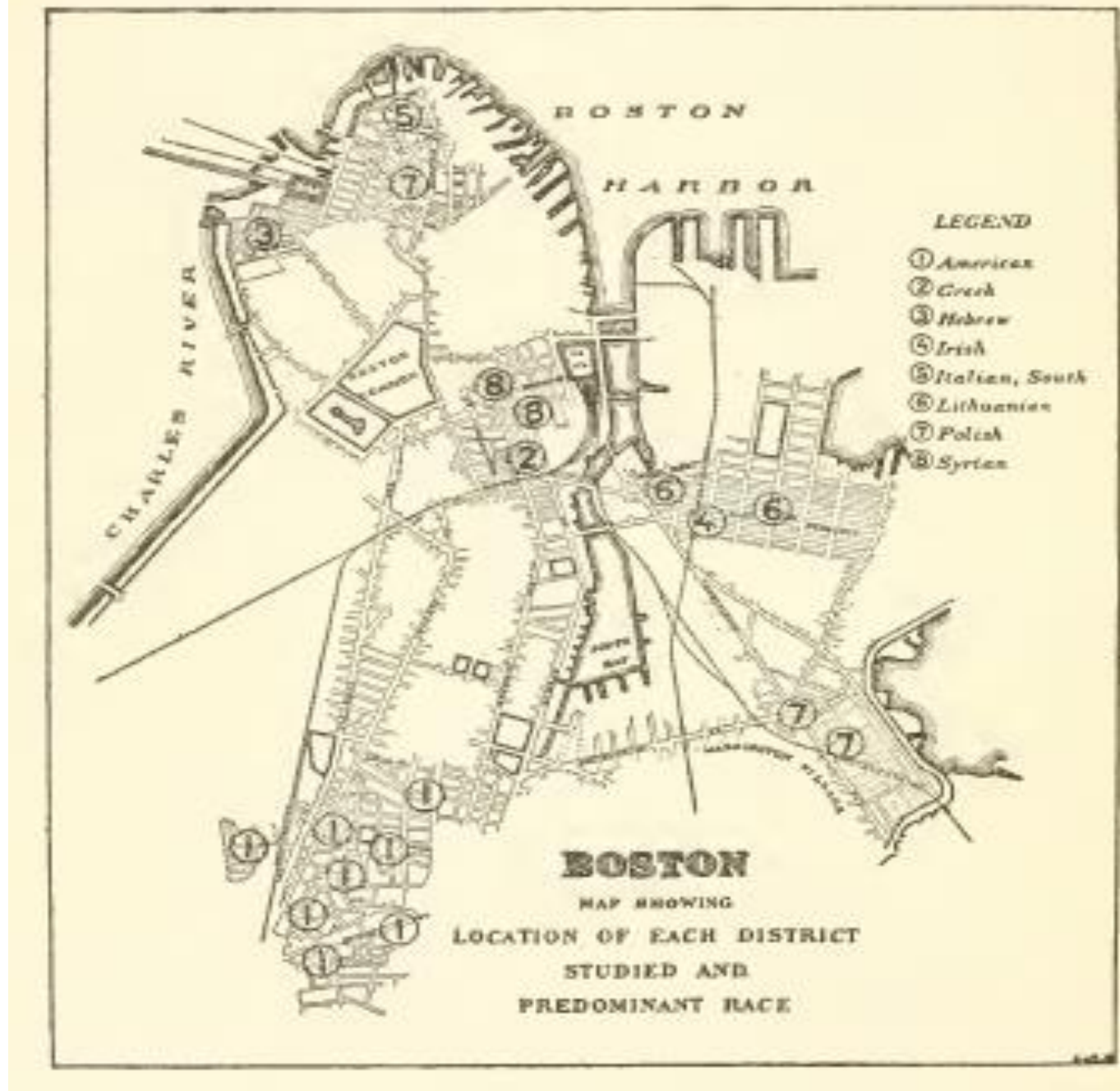
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1900-2010 Decennial Census, 2010 ACS, and REMI Analysis (2020 to 2100), BPDA Research Division Analysis

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1911 map shows clusters of immigrants from:

- Greece (2)
- Ireland (4)
- Italy (5)
- Lithuania (6)
- Poland (7)
- Syria (8)

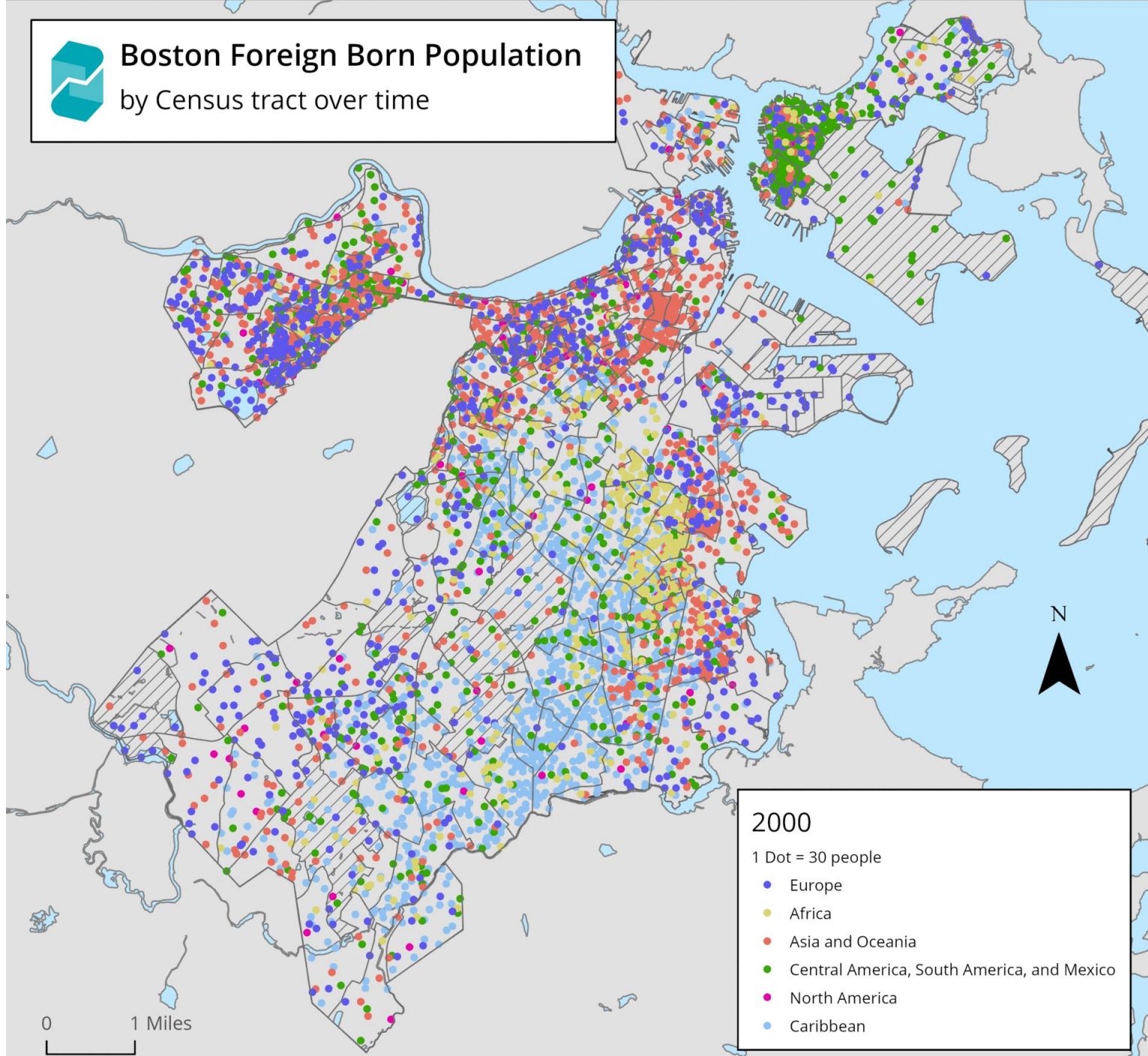


Source: US Immigration Report 1911 (re-published by Global Boston)

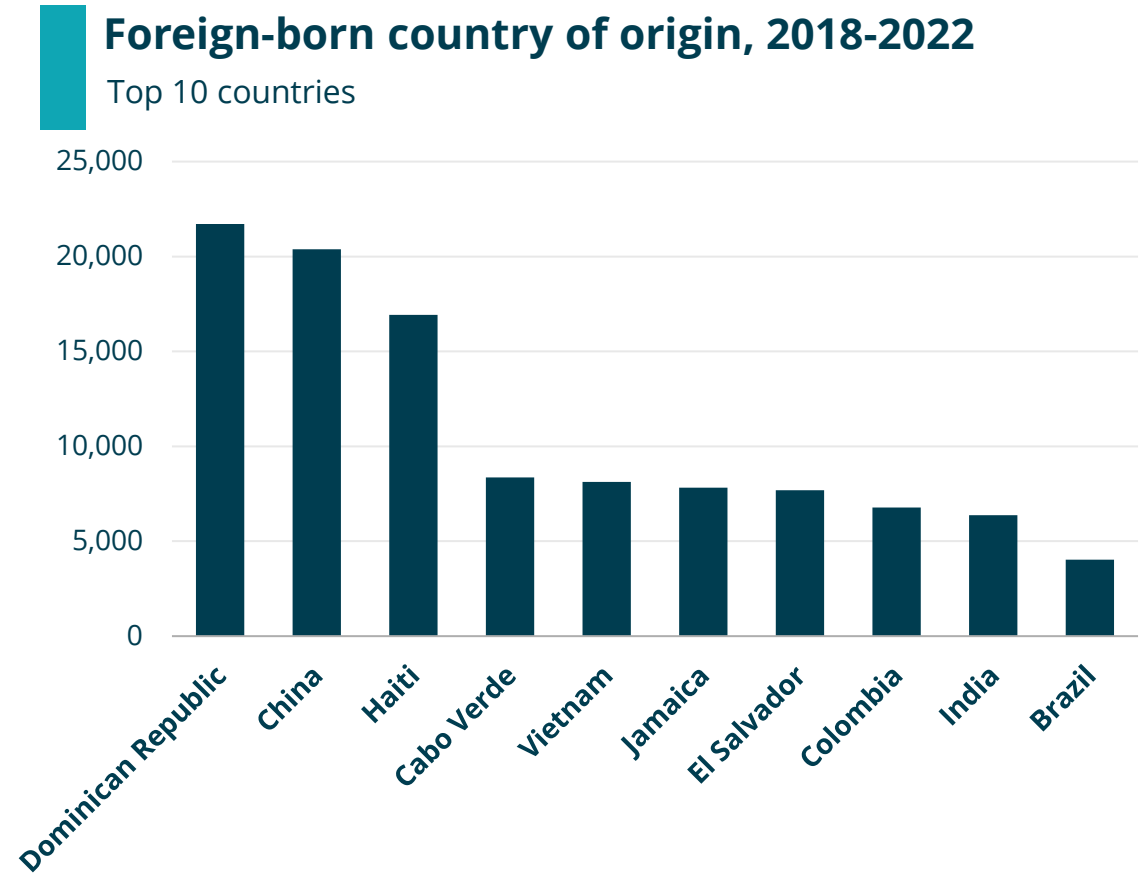
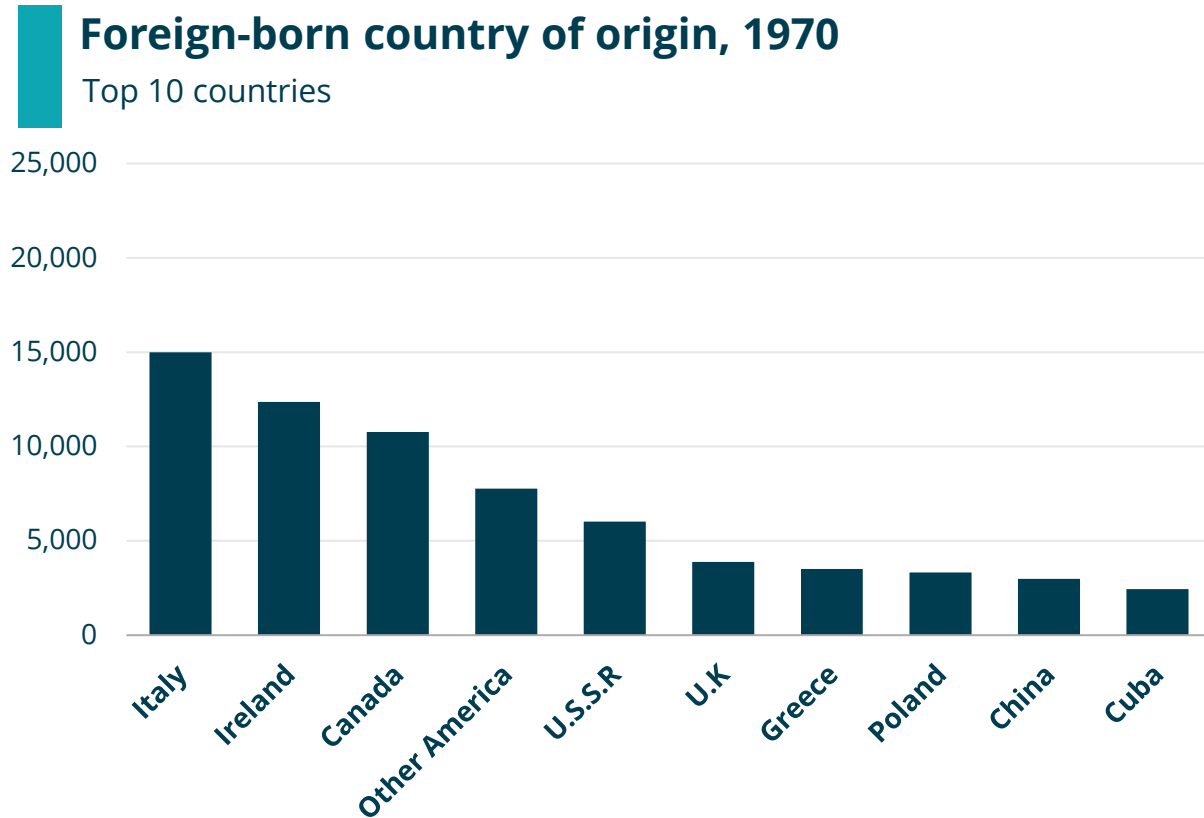


Boston Foreign Born Population

by Census tract over time



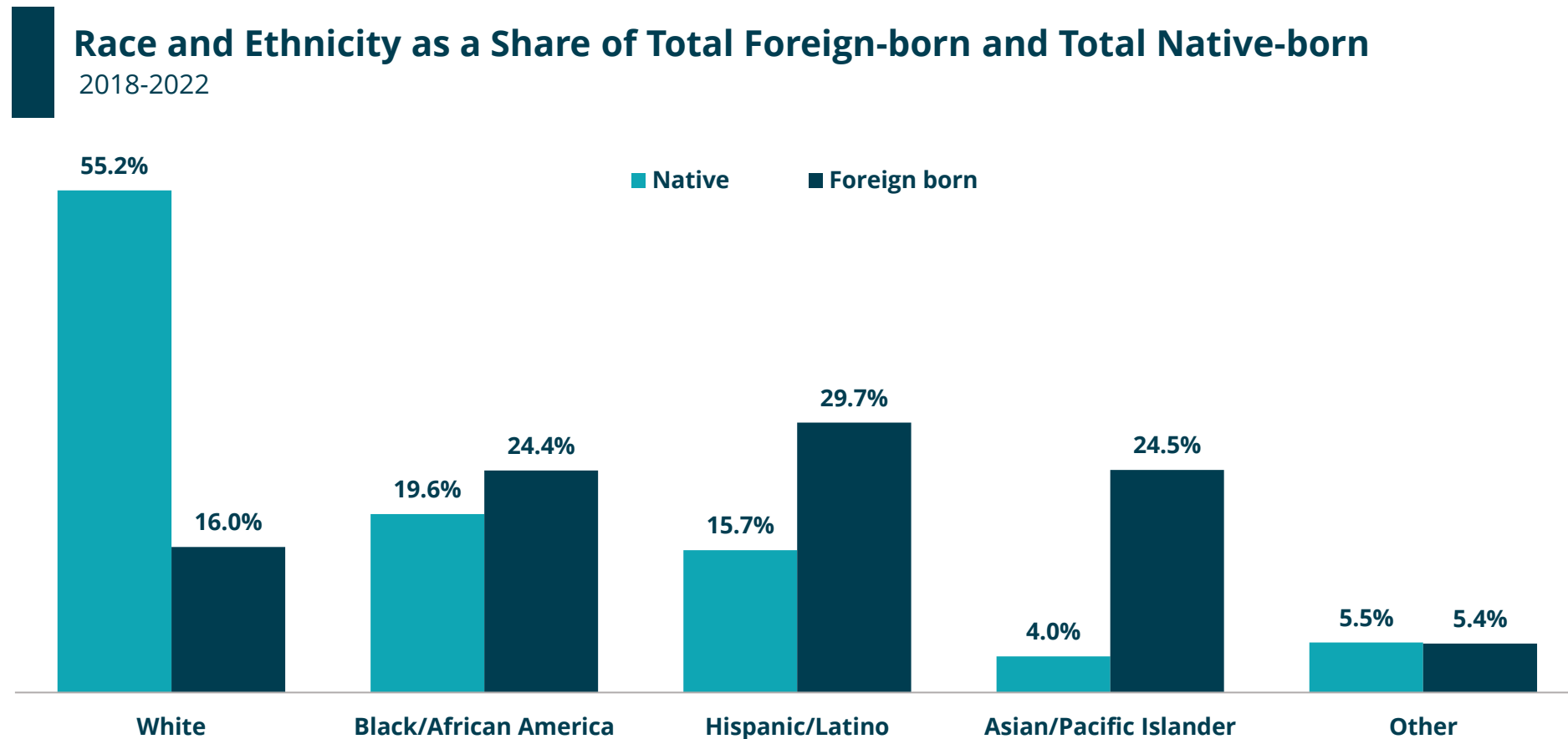
The foreign-born population of Boston in 1970 was smaller and predominantly European – Today's foreign-born population reflects changes to immigration policy



Source: NHGIS Tables 1970, BPDA Research Division Analysis

U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

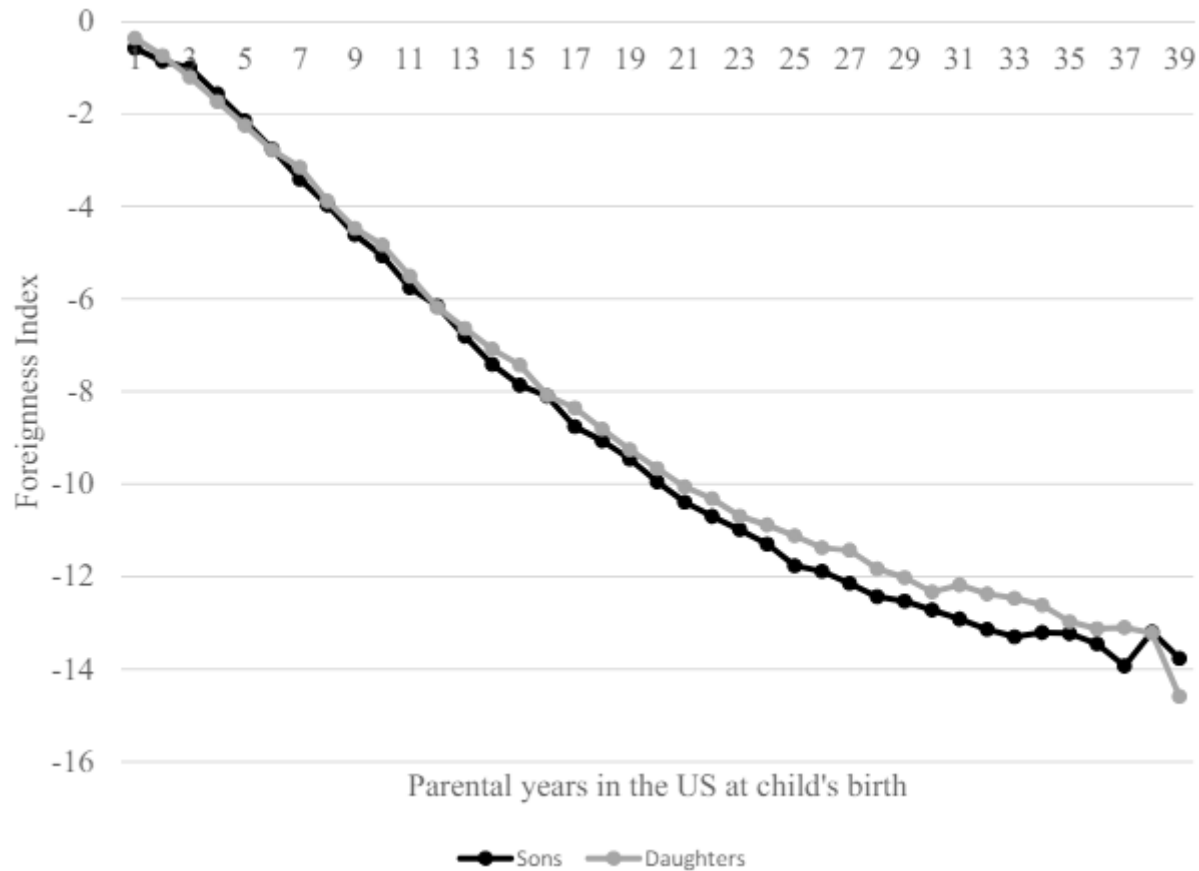
The foreign-born today are more likely to be Hispanic, Asian and Black/African American, reflecting origins in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Asia



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 American Community Survey, BPDA Research Division Analysis.

Assimilation: Immigrants choose less foreign names for their children as they spend more time in the US

Figure: Immigrants selected less foreign names for children after spending time in US



THOMAS	Life			M	27	71	1909	7/9	1918	Yes	Yes	Ireland
Richard	Daughter			F	21	9	1912	7/9		Yes	Yes	Massachusetts
August	Head	1	0	M	27	37	1904	12		Yes	Yes	Sturtevant
Emma	Life			F	28	41	1904	12		Yes	Yes	Sturtevant
Emil	son			M	28	15				Yes	Yes	Massachusetts
Richard	son			M	27	14				Yes	Yes	Massachusetts
Edwin	son			M	28	9	1912	12		Yes	Yes	Sturtevant
Juanette	Daughter			F	27	7	1912	12		Yes	Yes	Sturtevant
Asolen	Head	1	0	M	27	32				Yes	Yes	Massachusetts
Minnie	Life			F	27	32	1906	7/9	1909	Yes	Yes	England
Estrella	Daughter			F	28	9				Yes	Yes	Massachusetts

Name based assimilation is faster the more culturally distant the parents are from natives

Source: Abramitzky et al., National Bureau of Economic Research, 2020.

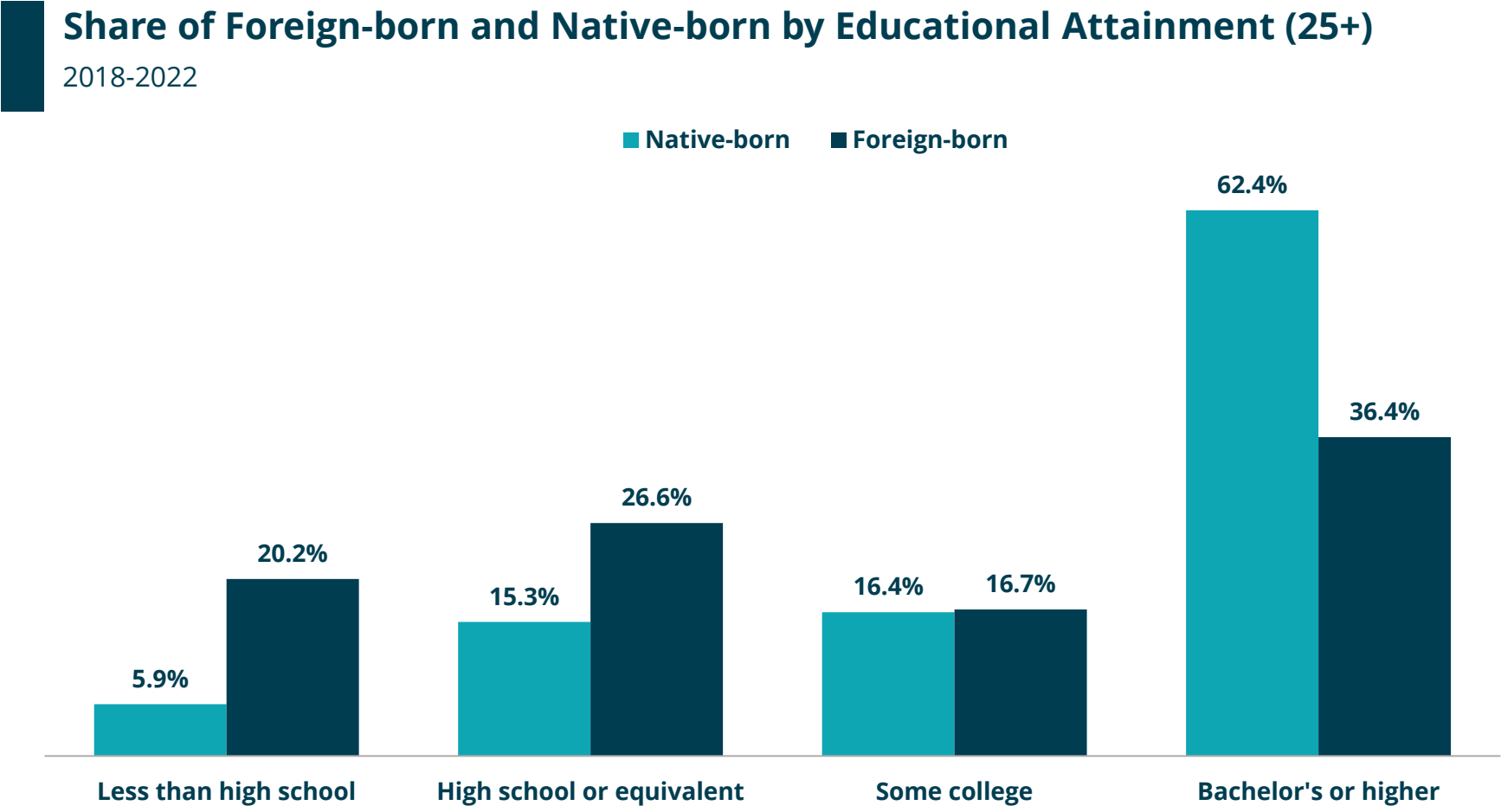
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Foreign born work in Boston through different arrangements

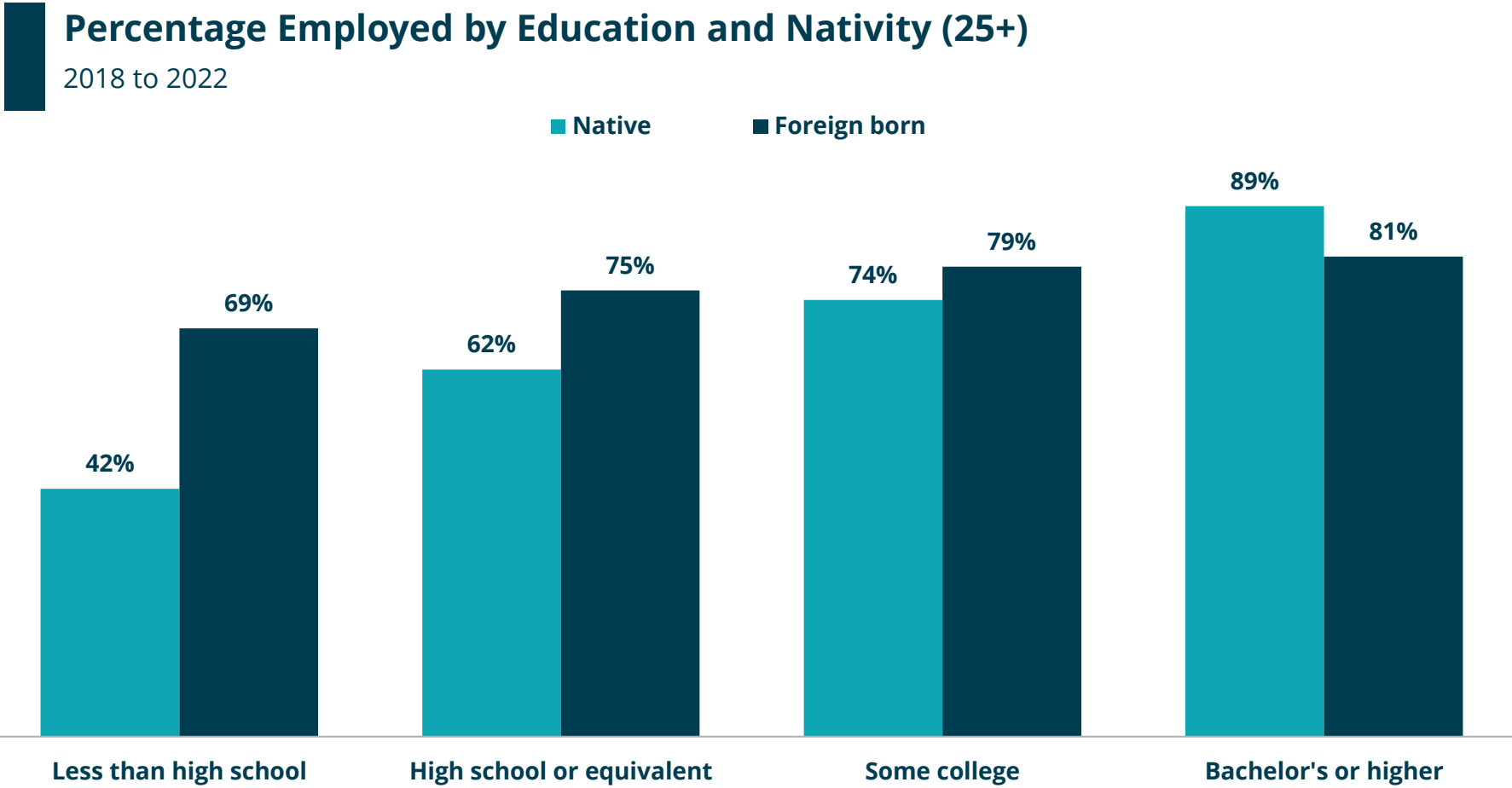
- **Visas for temporary work include:**
 - F1 student visas, H-1B for highly-skilled workers, H-2B for low-skilled non-agricultural workers and J-1 for exchange visitors
- **Temporary Protected Status (TPS) allows residents of countries designated by USCIS permission to work**
- **Refugees, asylees have permission to work; parole grants temporary permission to work**
- **Green-card holders can work permanently**
- **Naturalized citizens can work permanently**
 - About 55% of foreign born in Boston are naturalized citizens (ACS, 2022)
- **Many foreign born also work as unauthorized workers**

U.S. immigration policy favors those with higher levels of education, but nearly half of Boston's foreign born residents aged 25+ have a high school education or less



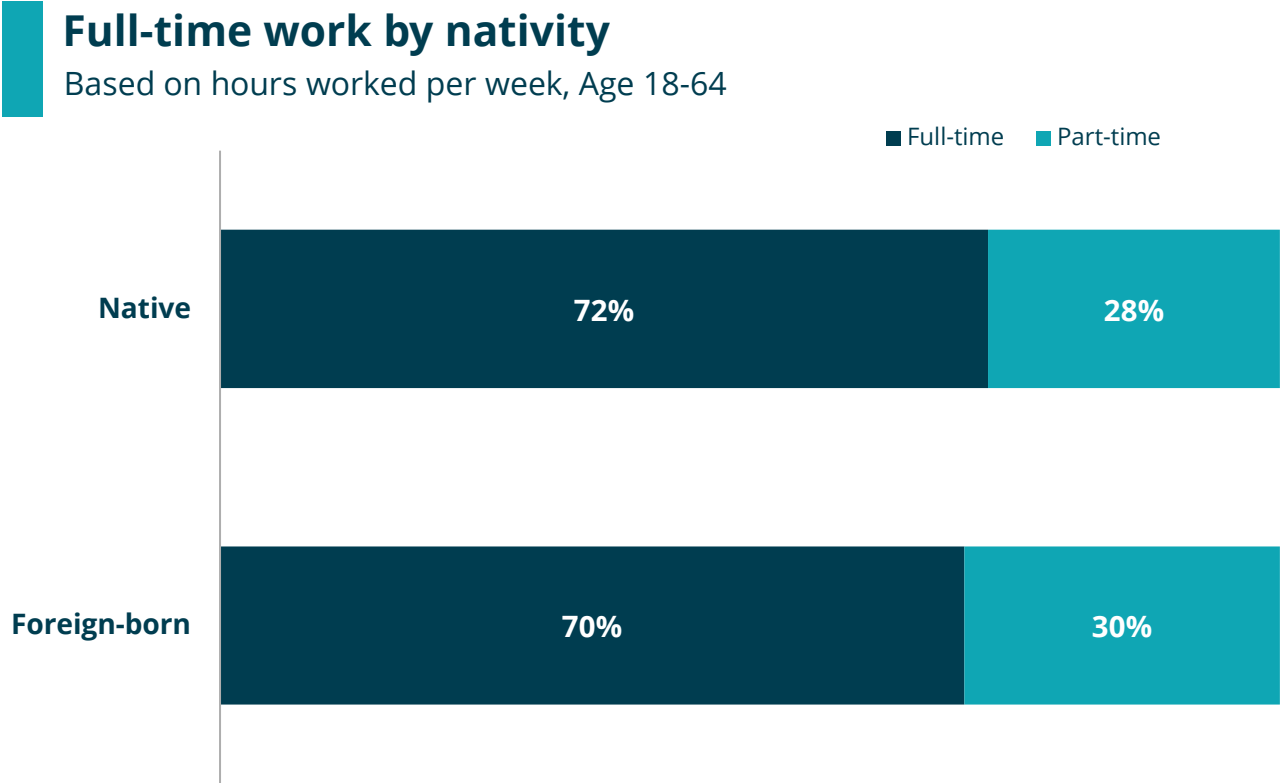
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born Boston residents are more likely to be employed at all levels at most educational levels



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born Boston residents are slightly more likely to work full-time

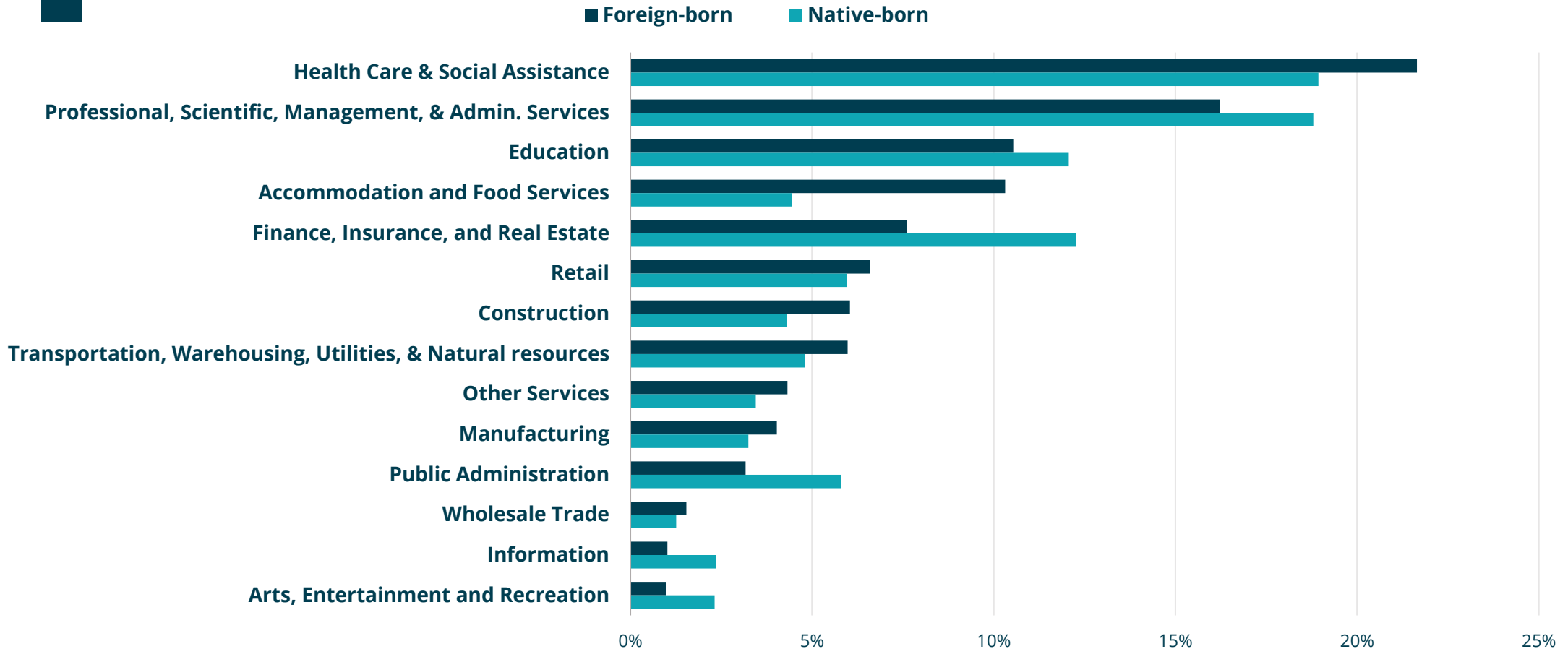


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Most foreign born work in health care and social assistance, followed by the professional, scientific, management and administrative service industry

Industry of Work, as a Share of the Foreign-born population

2018-2022

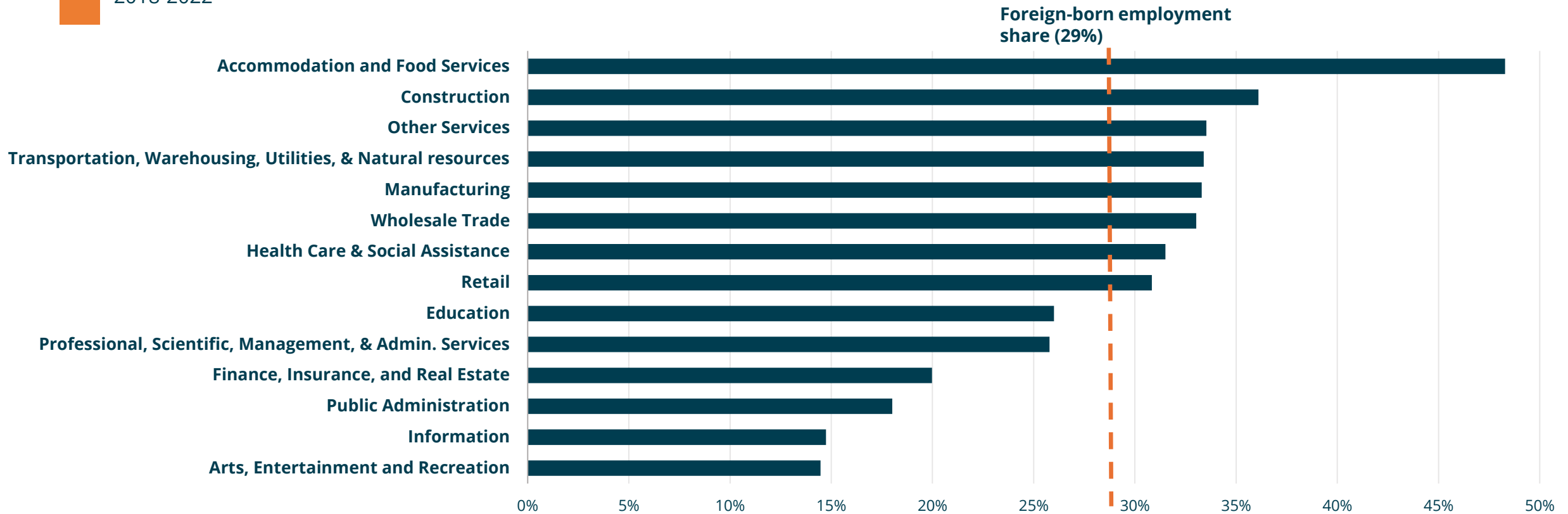


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born workers comprise almost half of the employees in accommodation and food services

Industry of Work, as a Share of Industry Employment

2018-2022

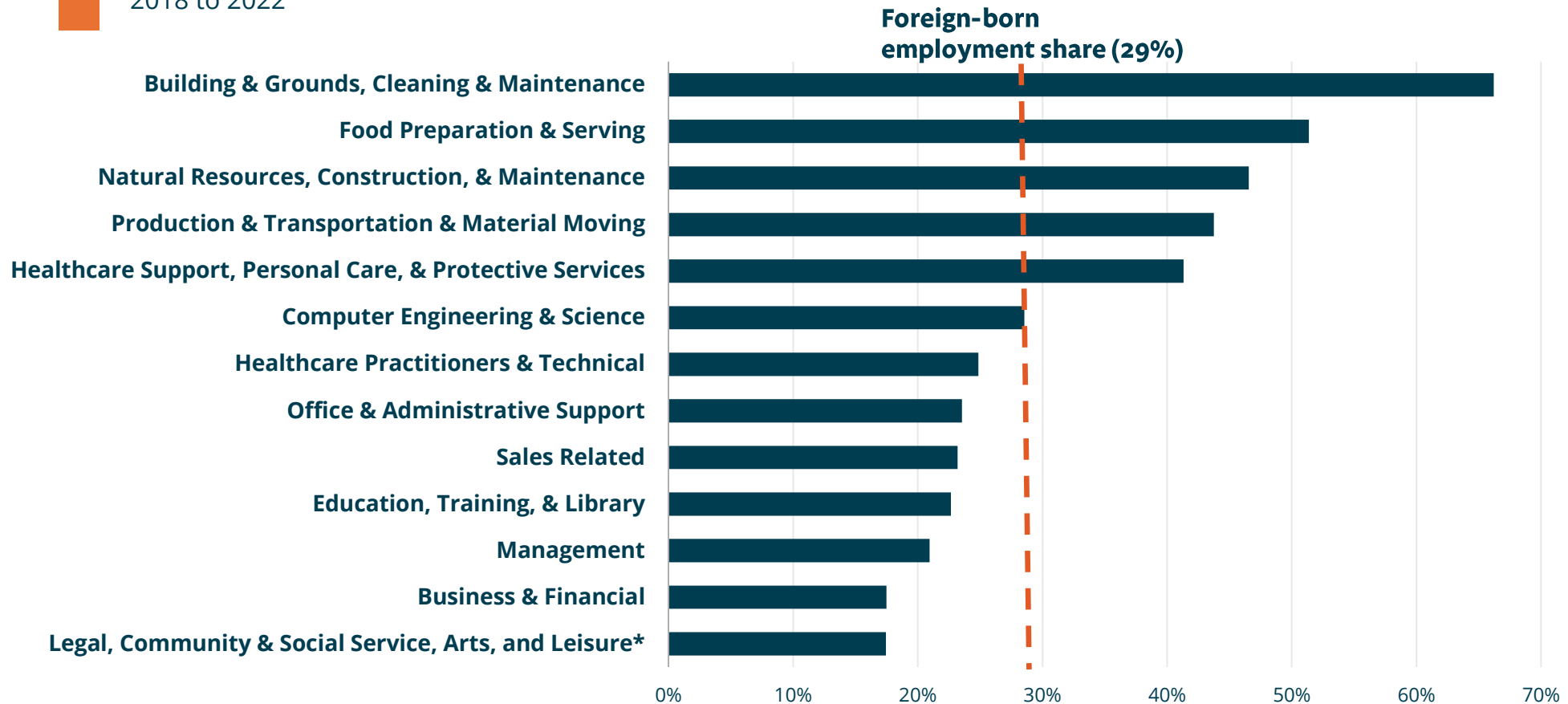


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Foreign-born workers are over-represented in some blue collar and service occupations

Share of Foreign Born Workers by Occupational Category

2018 to 2022

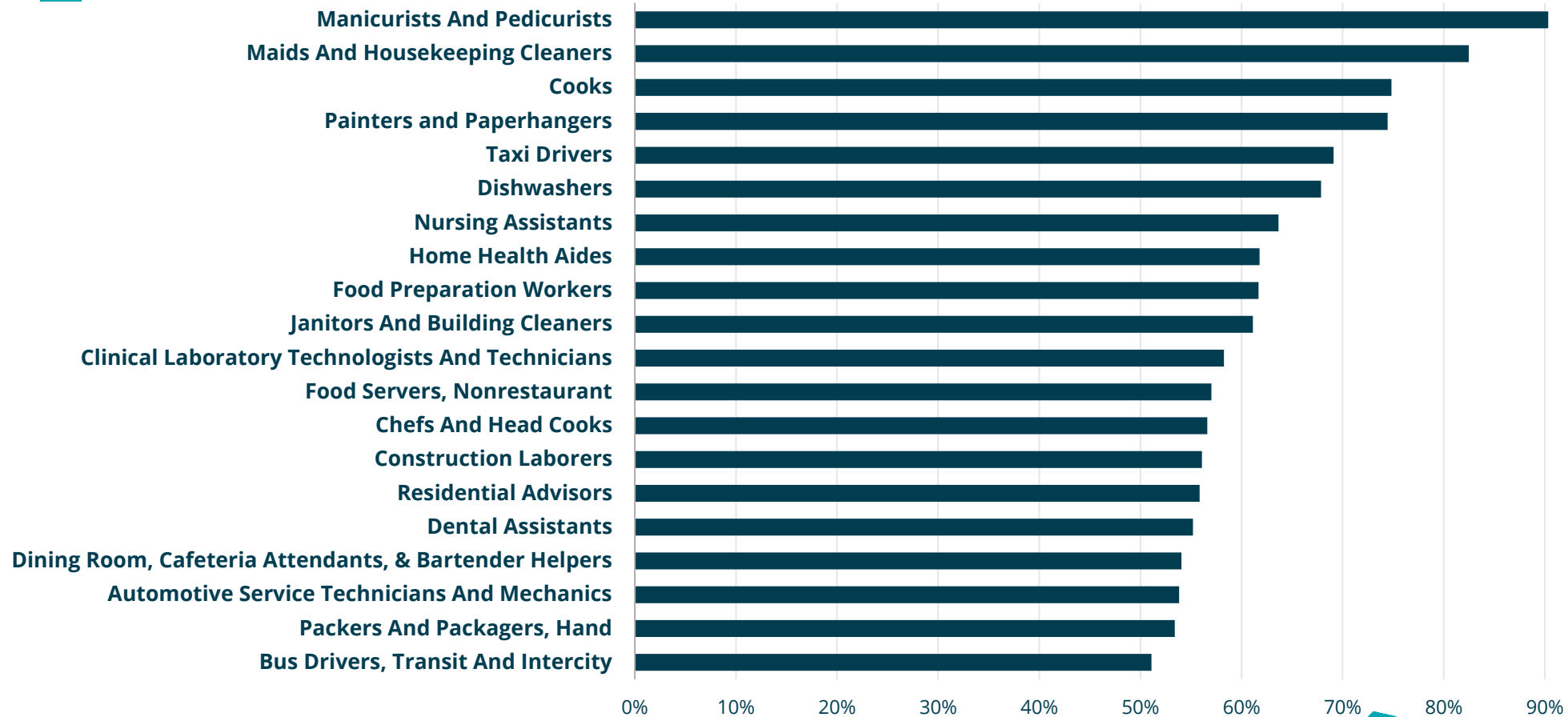


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

The occupation with the highest share of foreign-born workers is Manicurists and Pedicurists with 90%

Occupations with More than 50% Foreign-Born Workers

2018-2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2018-2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

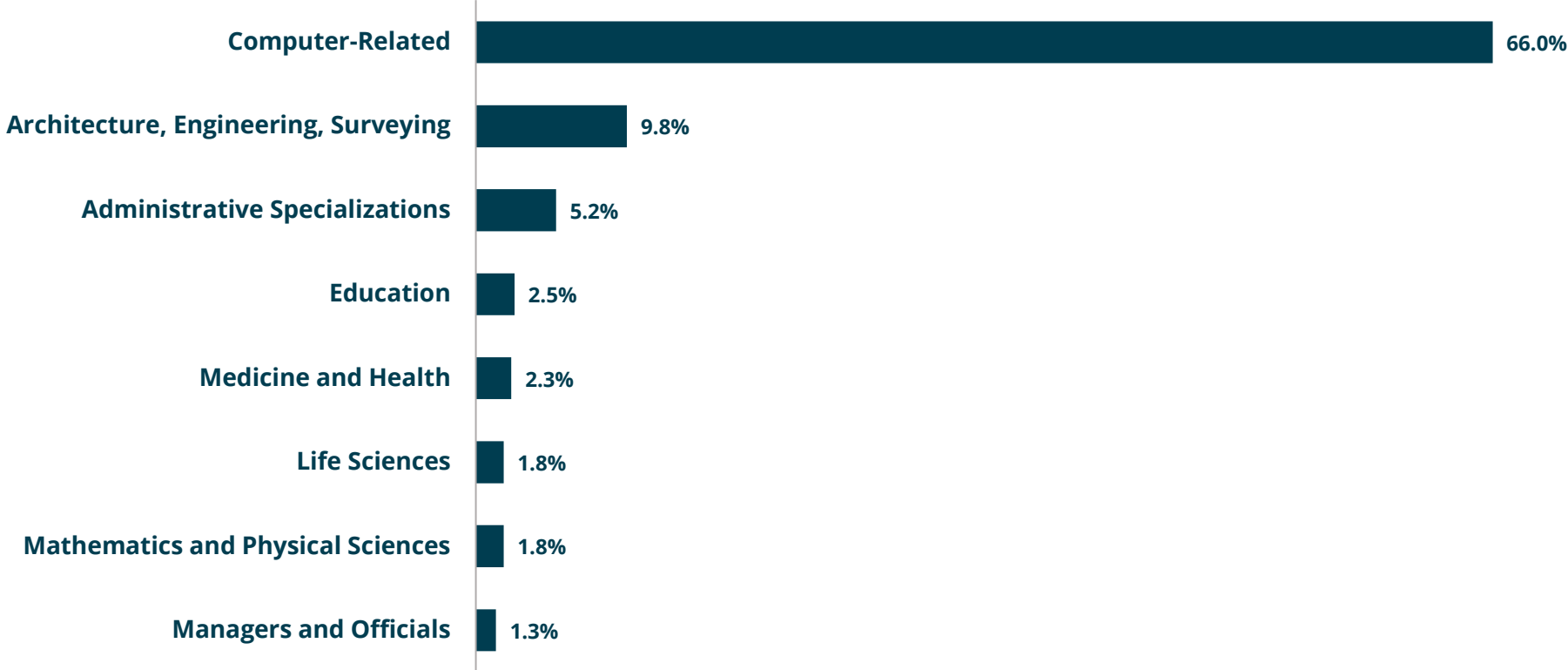
Workers with college degrees are often hired through the H-1B visa



- These are temporary working visas for 3 years, can be renewed for a total work time of 6 years.
- Employees must have at least a Bachelor's degree, and work duties must be complex and specialized.
- Annual cap nationally: 65,000+ for BA and an extra 20,000 for graduate degrees.

Two-thirds of H1-B holders nationally work in computer-related occupations

Major Occupational Groups of Approved H1-B Beneficiaries FY 2022

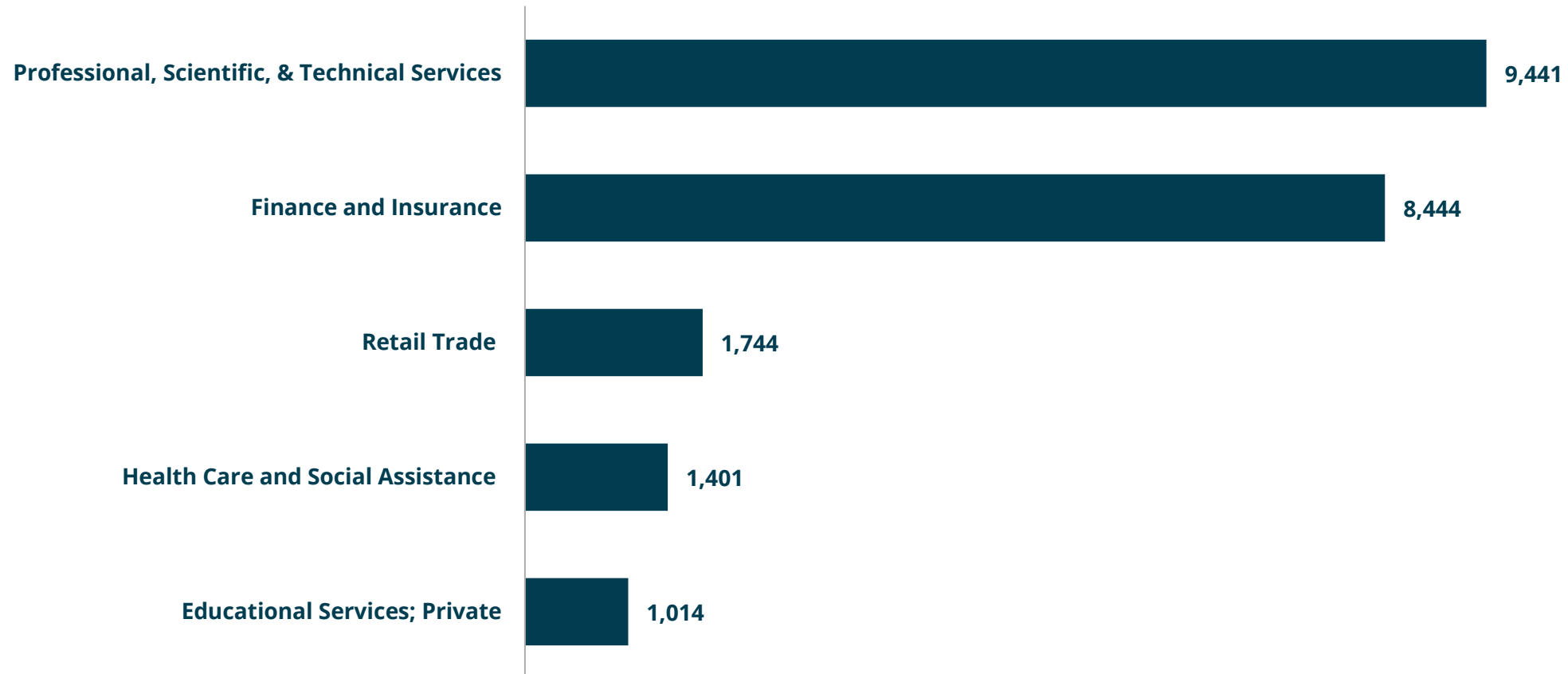


Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Characteristics of H-1B Specialty Occupation Workers, Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report to Congress, BPDA Research Division Analysis

Boston employers sponsored petitions for ~25,000 H-1B visa workers between 2020-2022, concentrated in Finance and Insurance and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

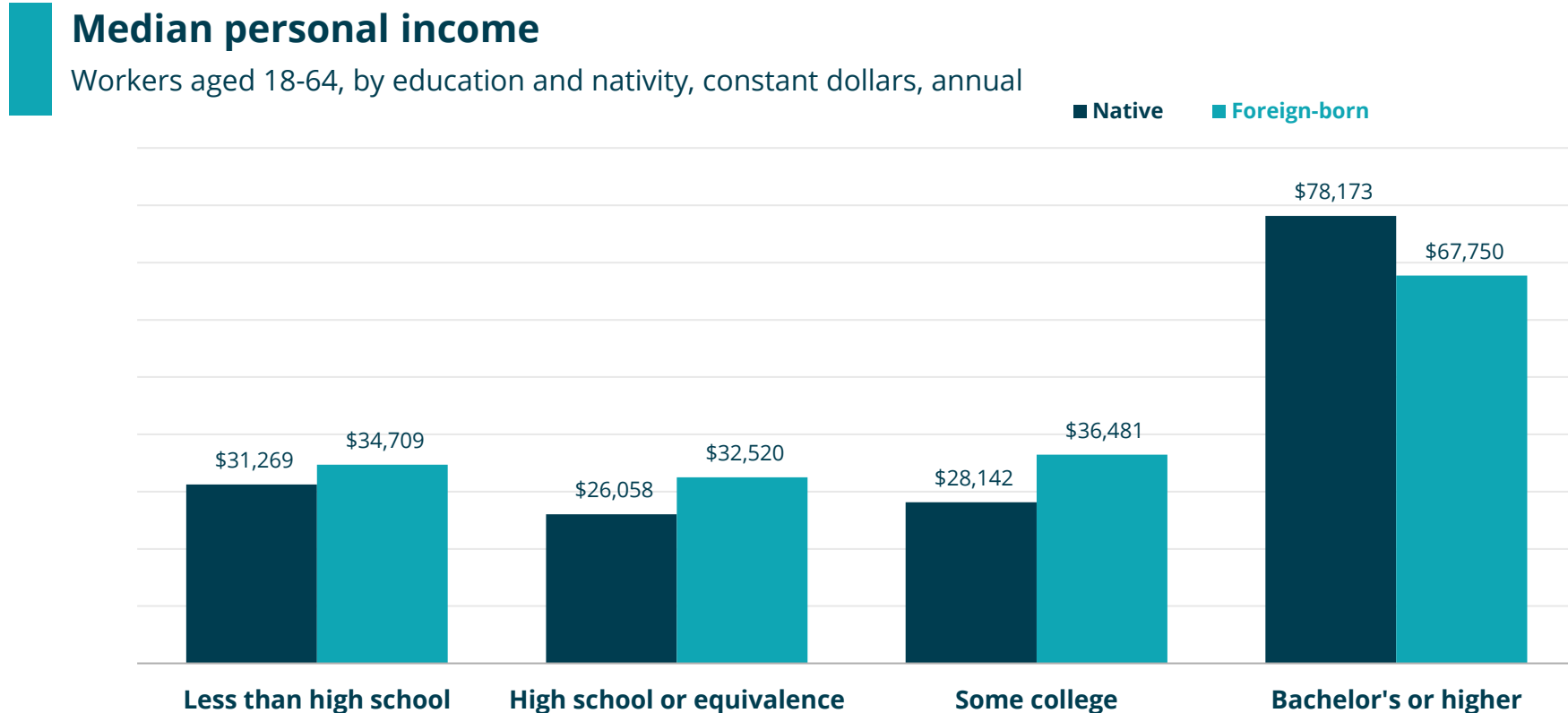
Boston Total H1-B Worker Estimates (Top 5 Industries)

2022



Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, H-1B Specialty Occupation Workers, BPDA Research Division Analysis

By educational level, foreign-born workers earn more, except among those with a Bachelor's degree or higher



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2022, BPDA Research Division Analysis

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Conclusions

Contributions of Boston's Foreign-Born



Immigrants have historic importance in Boston

Boston's share of immigrants is about twice the national average.

Demographic Contributions

As native birth rates decline, foreign-born contribute to population growth, as in the 1970s.

Economic Contributions

The foreign-born work in key industries that would be hard hit without their contributions.

Want to learn more?

Some resources (links):



[Office of Immigrant Advancement](#)

[BPDA Diversity Index Tool](#)

[BPDA Boston by the Numbers 2020](#)