



Dominicans in the New York Metro Area

QUICK FACTS:

Place of Origin:

Dominican Republic
(primarily Santo Domingo)

Location in Metro New York:

Manhattan (Washington Heights, Inwood, Hamilton Heights, Cathedral); **Bronx** (Kingsbridge Heights, Highbridge, University Heights, Morris Heights, Tremont, Fordham); **Queens** (Corona); **New Jersey** (Passaic, Paterson, Perth Amboy); **Brooklyn** (Williamsburg); **Rockland** (Haverstraw); **Westchester** (Sleepy Hollow); **Nassau** (Freeport)

Population in Metro New York:

914,512 (ACS 2010 Specific Origin Dominican Republic); **560,534** (ACS 2010 Born in Dominican Republic)

Population in New York City:

620,394 (ACS 2010 Specific Origin Dominican Republic); **382,346** (ACS 2010 Born in Dominican Republic)

Primary Religion:

Christianity (Roman Catholic, evangelical)

Status of Christian Witness:

Greater than or equal to 10% evangelical.

Primary Language:

Spanish

Secondary Language:

English

Registry of Peoples Code:

109534

Significant Notes:

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, 62% of Dominicans in the United States live in Metro New York.

Dominicans are the largest immigrant group in Metro New York, and they make up around 7% of New York City's population (Puerto Ricans have a larger population, but are technically not immigrants since they receive US citizenship at birth).

ALL PEOPLES INITIATIVE LAST UPDATED: 01/2009

Known for their baseball prowess and the merengue, Dominicans have been further introduced to a wider American audience through the Tony-award winning musical *In the Heights*, a rap-infused Broadway show set in Upper Manhattan's Washington Heights, the social center of Dominican life in the United States. In the musical, the main character struggles with a longing to return to the Dominican Republic but, like many of the nearly one million Dominicans in Metro New York, realizes that the city has become home. Dominicans are the largest immigrant group in the city and make up about seven percent of New York City's population (ACS 2008). Among children in public schools, this number is even higher. Now that they have a large, established, and recognized community, Dominican New Yorkers play an increasing role in both city and Dominican Republic politics. Leonel Fernández, who is now serving his third term as the President of the Dominican Republic, actually grew up in Washington Heights, and the political clout of Dominican New Yorkers influenced legislation in 1994 that allowed Dominican Americans to become citizens of both countries.¹ In 1991, the Dominican presence influenced a redistricting of the New York City Council, creating a new seat in northern Manhattan that has been held by a Dominican ever since.² With Metro New York's diminishing Puerto Rican population, and with the continued increase of Dominicans, a shift in local Latino power could be taking place.

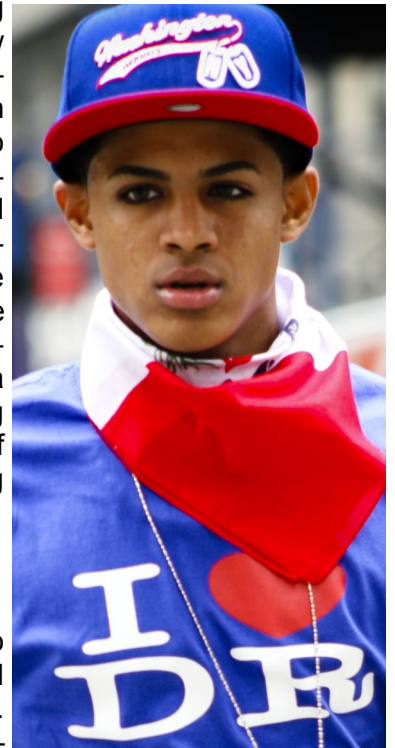


Photo by Kristine Endsley

When Did They Come to New York?

Following the 1961 assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo and the 1965 civil war between supporters of differing political factions—a struggle that ultimately ended in a Lyndon B. Johnson-ordered invasion of US troops to restore peace—Dominicans migrated en masse to New York City. For a couple of decades, these migrants were largely those who were on the losing side of the political struggle or were otherwise politically repressed. Starting in the 1980s, though, the deteriorating Dominican economy provided extra motivation for people from every class of society to find a place in the already-famous Dominican *barrio* in Washington Heights. In 1991, the minimum monthly salary for fulltime work was thirteen times higher in New York than in the Dominican Republic.³ While the Dominican Republic's economy and political situation have become much more stable in the twenty-first century, Dominicans still account for a large percentage of immigration to the city.

Where Do They Live?

Towards the end of *In the Heights*, the local beauty salon closes down in Washington Heights in order to reopen in West Bronx. This event accurately reflects what is happening in the Dominican community. In 2000, there were 125,063 Dominican-born in Manhattan and 124,032 in the Bronx. By 2008, the Bronx had a larger Dominican population, with 140,856 Dominican-born compared to Manhattan's 100,312. Dominicans have also dispersed throughout the Metro area, with Corona, Queens, and Passaic, New Jersey, among other places, having large concentrations.

What Do They Believe?

Religion is an important part of Dominican life, and while almost everyone in the Dominican Republic is Catholic, many Dominicans are becoming evangelical Christians in Metro New York. A recent study shows that forty-six percent of New York Dominicans consider themselves born-again or evangelical.⁴

What Are Their Lives Like?

Two of baseball's biggest stars, Alex Rodriguez and Manny Ramirez, spent some of their childhood in Washington Heights, and many young Dominican men put their hope in baseball for a better future. Dominicans are also known for running bodegas (small, corner grocery stores), driving "gypsy" taxicabs, and working in the garment, hotel, and restaurant industries.

How Can I Pray?

∞ Many Dominicans are becoming faithful followers of Christ, either as evangelical Protestants or as Catholics who believe it is necessary to be a "born-again" believer. Pray that Dominicans will have a spiritual, and not just a political, impact on Metro New York.

1. Pamela M. Graham, "Political Incorporation and Re-Incorporation: Simultaneity in the Dominican Migrant Experience," in Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán, Robert C. Smith, and Ramón Grosfoguel, eds., *Migration, Transnationalization, and Race in a Changing New York* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2001), 87.
2. Ibid., 88.
3. Nancy Foner, *New Immigrants in New York: Completely Revised and Updated Edition* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 3.
4. Unpublished survey data from the Pew Research Center Survey on Latino Religious Belief in America, 2007.