



Historical Trends in Boston Neighborhoods since 1950

1950 to 2020

June 2023
Research Division



**boston planning &
development agency**

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The BPDA Research Division strives to understand the current environment of the city to produce quality research and targeted information that will inform and benefit the residents and businesses of Boston. The Division conducts research on Boston's economy, population, and commercial markets for all departments of the BPDA, the City of Boston, and related organizations. The information provided in this report is the best available at the time of its publication.

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Notes on Data and Methodology

Data in this report are drawn from 1950-2020 Decennial Censuses and the 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 American Community Surveys.

The smallest available geography for some variables is the Census tract. Therefore, neighborhood boundaries are approximated using 2020 Census tract boundaries. Older data are crosswalked to the 2020 tracts to provide a consistent geography over the decades. See the back of this report for a description of the methodology.

Because they cannot be separately identified at the Census tract level, the Leather District is combined with Downtown and Bay Village is combined with the South End.

Census Tract 9815.02 is partially in East Boston and partially in Revere, but almost the entire population is in Revere so it is excluded from the East Boston approximation.



Historical Trends in Boston Neighborhoods since 1950

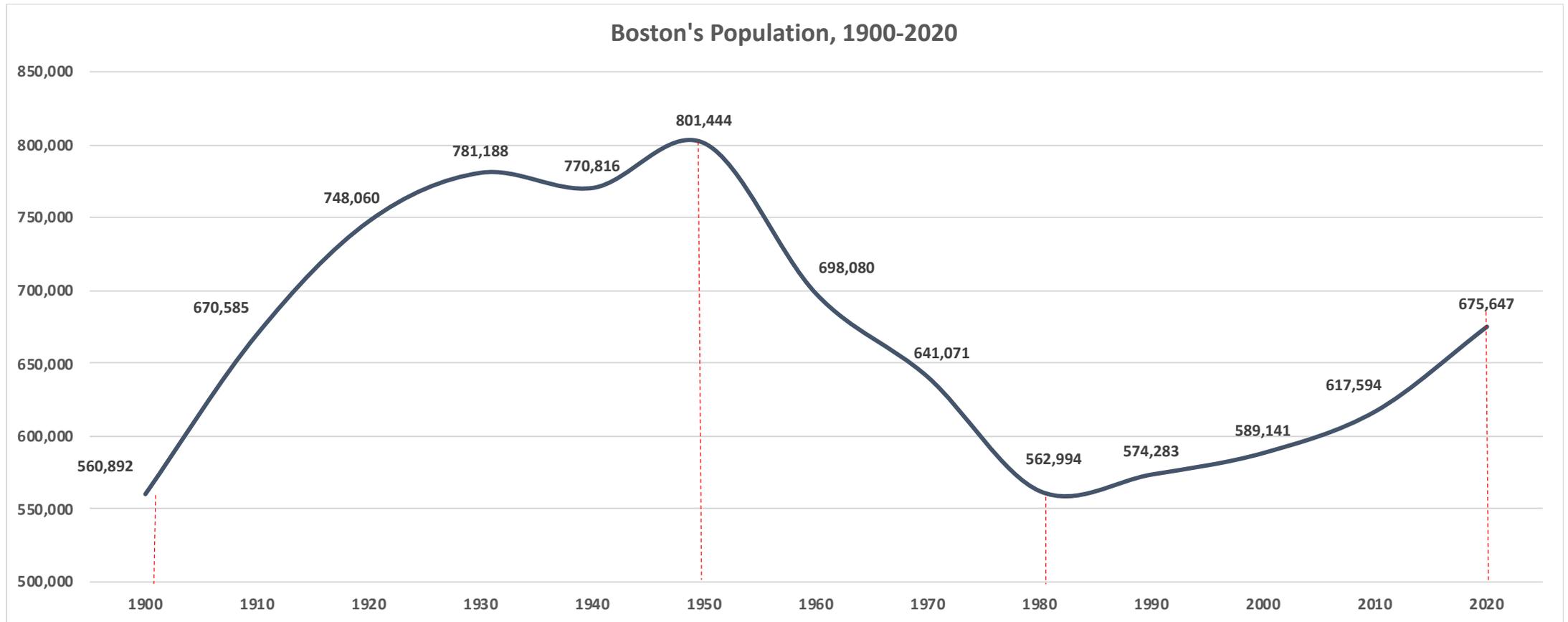
- Population
- Housing
- Age Distribution
- Race/Ethnicity
- Nativity
- Educational Attainment
- Labor Force

1.

POPULATION TRENDS



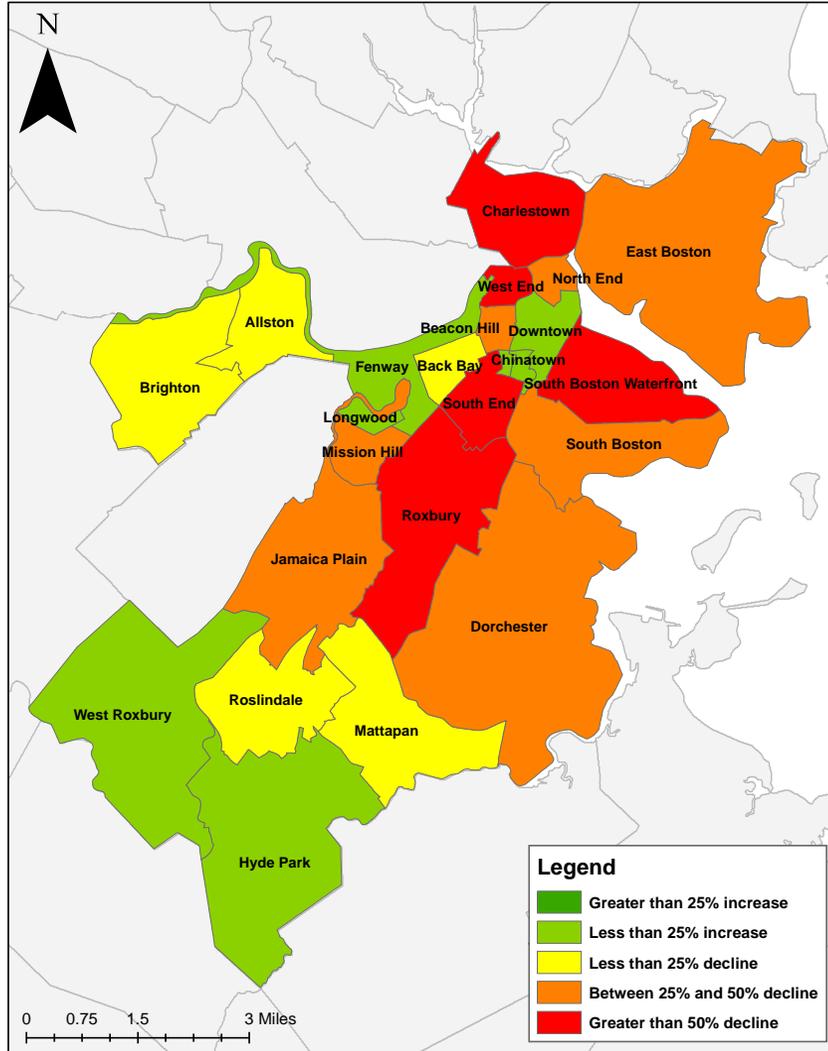
- Boston's population reached its peak in 1950, with just over 800,000 residents.
- Like many major U.S. cities, Boston experienced significant decline in the post-World War II era. By 1980, Boston's population fell to under 563,000 residents.
- Since 1980, Boston's population grew by 20%, with the 2010 Census marking the first time since 1970 that Boston's population exceeded 600,000 people.



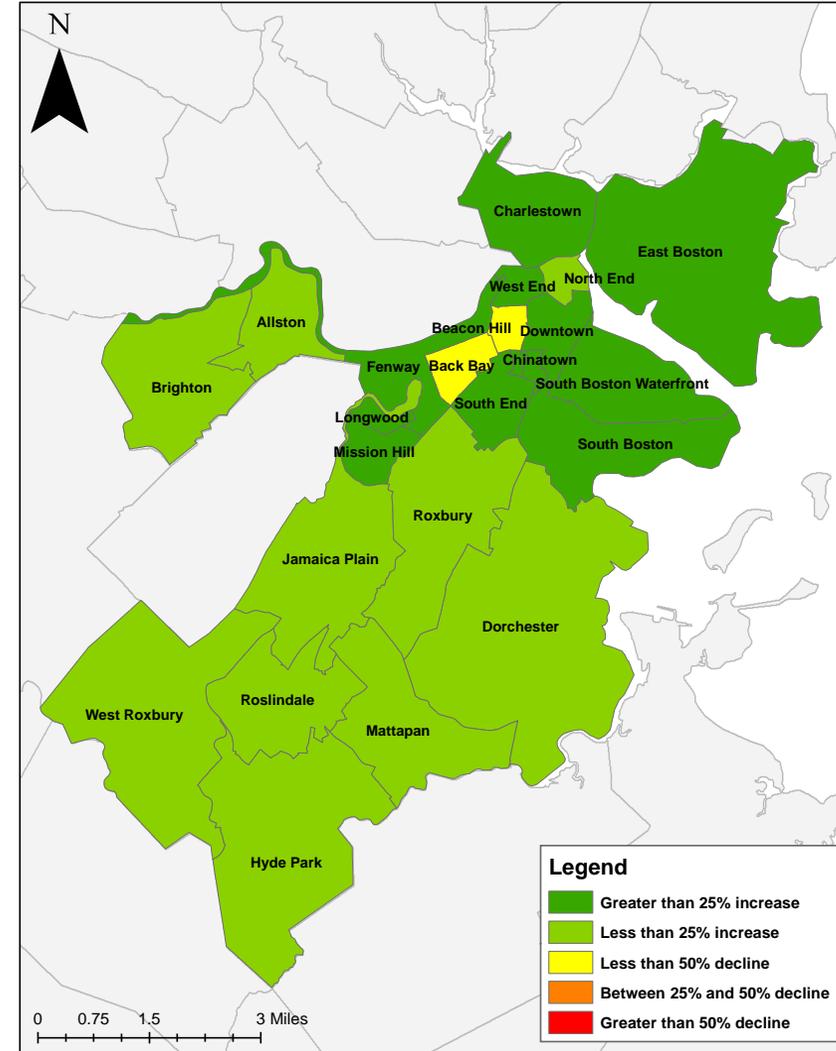
Source: Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- In 2020, most of Boston's neighborhoods have regained their population loss from 1980, although some remain below their 1950 population peak.

Percent Population Change by Neighborhood, 1950-1980

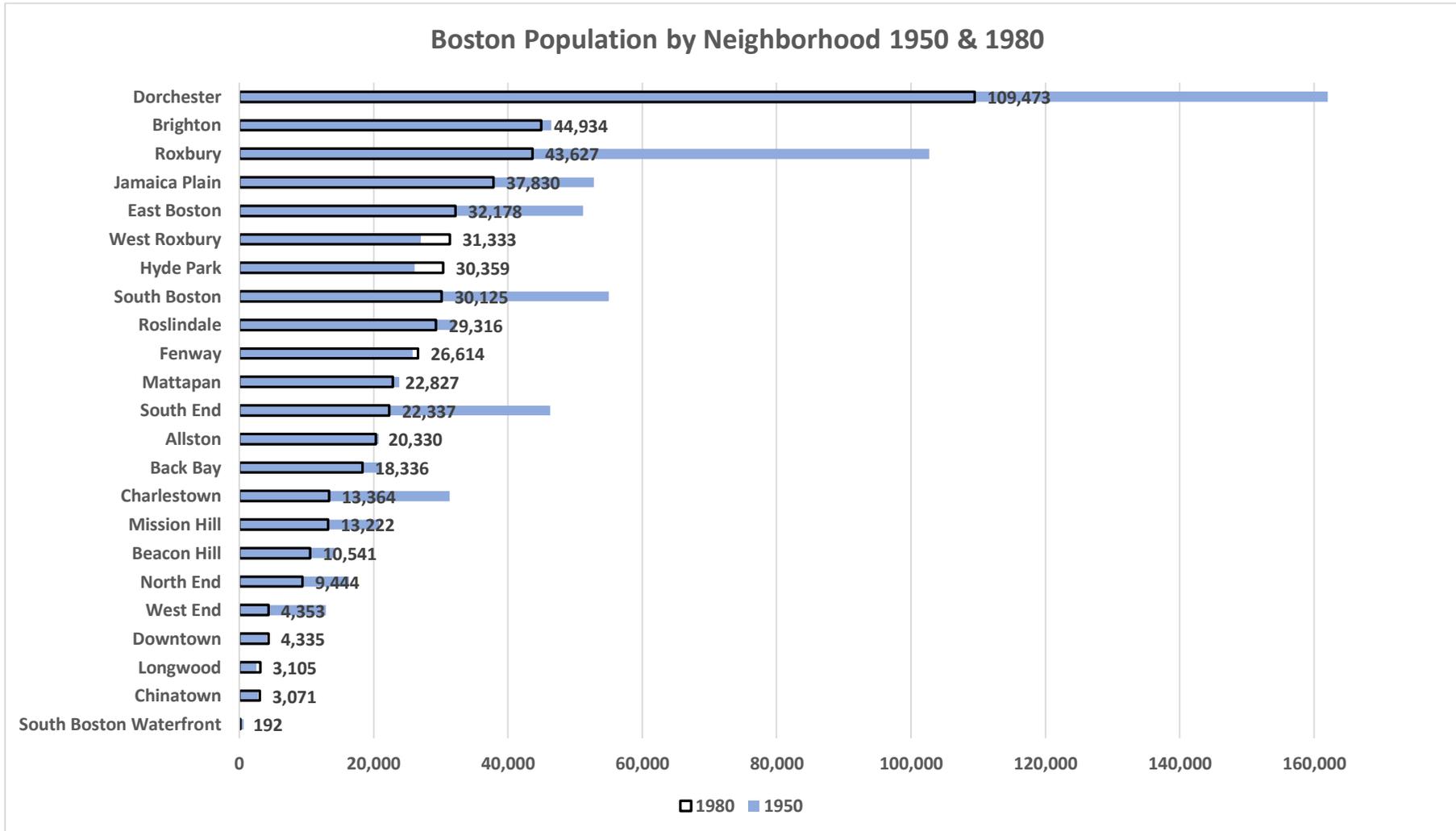


Percent Population Change by Neighborhood, 1980-2020

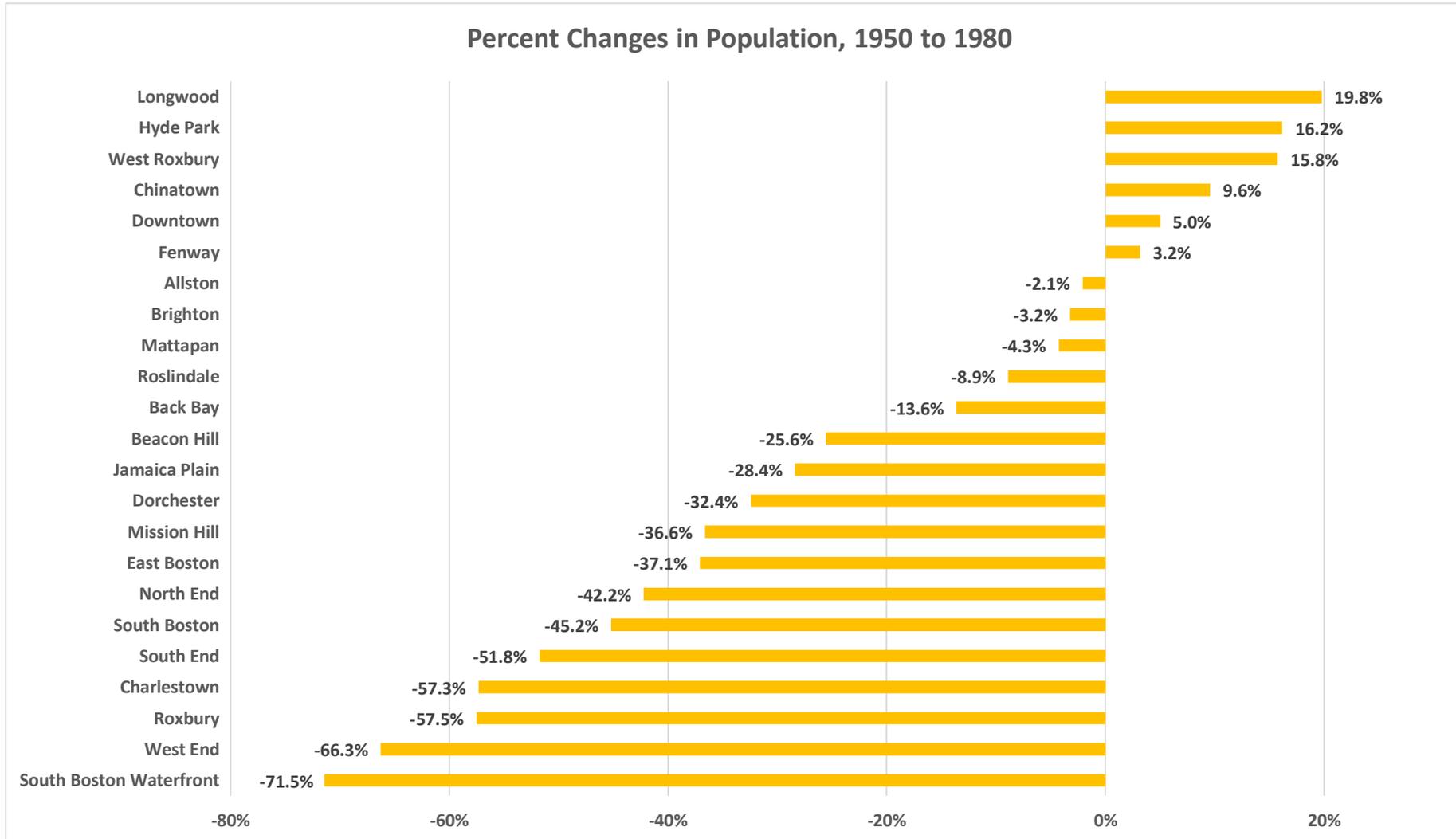


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950, 1980, & 2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

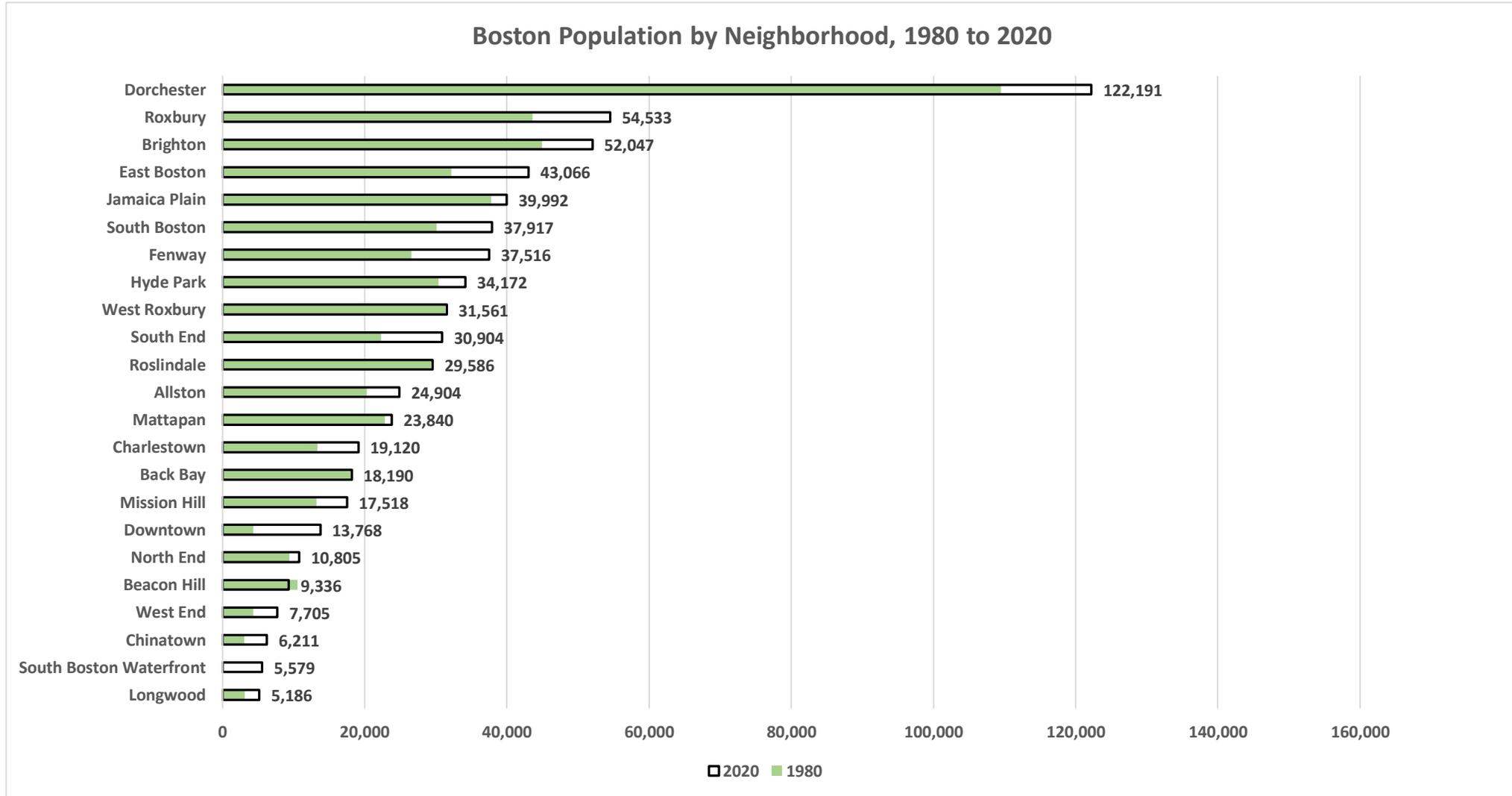
- Boston's population declined by 238,450 people from 1950 to 1980.
- Roxbury, Dorchester, South End, South Boston, and East Boston accounted for 75% of the city's population loss.
- Dorchester remained the largest neighborhood, but Brighton became second largest after Roxbury's population loss.



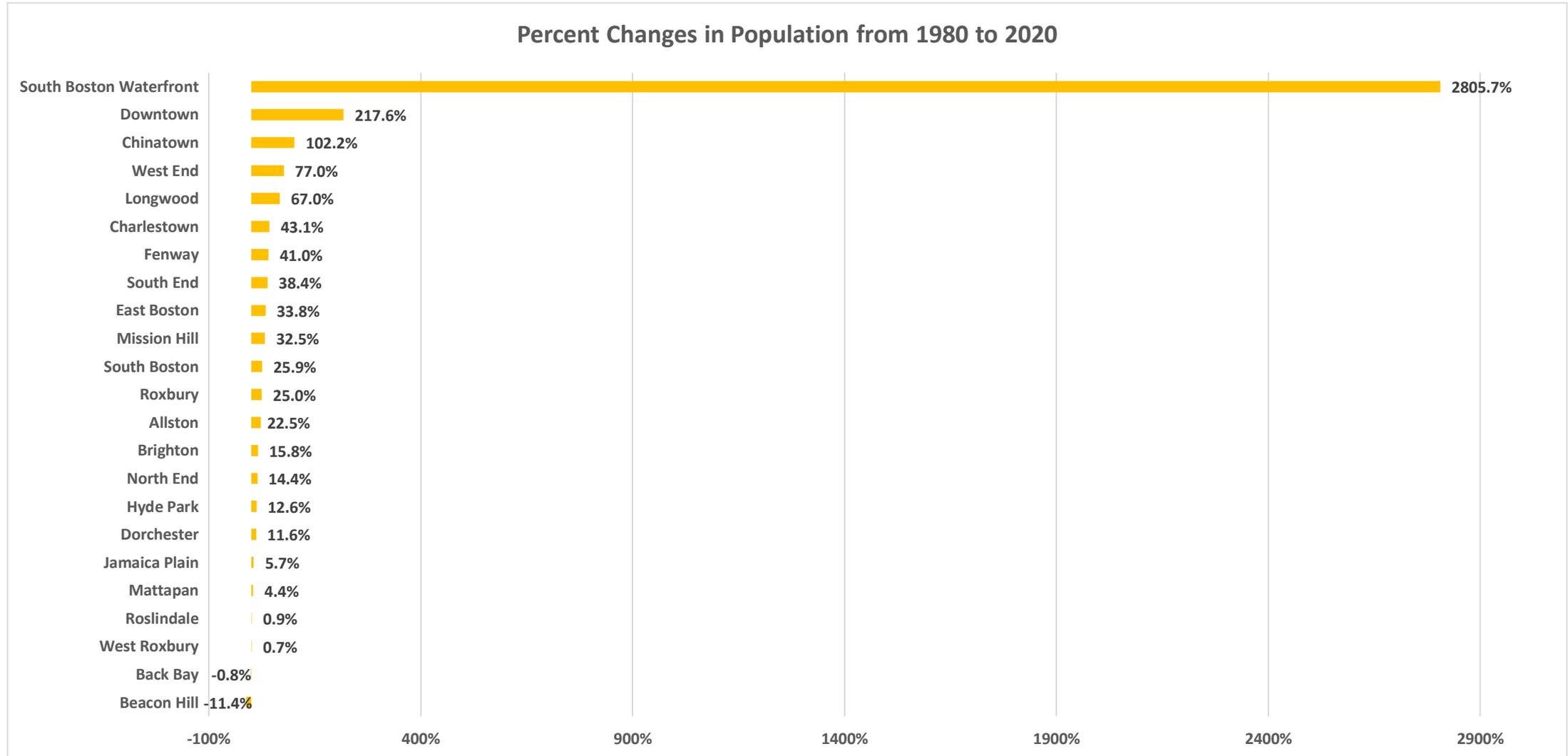
- The small neighborhood of Longwood had the largest percentage gain of almost 20% from 1950 to 1980, while Hyde Park and West Roxbury gained around 16% of their population.
- The larger neighborhoods of the South End, Charlestown, and Roxbury lost over 50% of their population.



- Boston's population began to grow again after 1980.
- Dorchester grew to 121,191 people by 2020, still below the 162,045 population of 1950.
- Roxbury grew to 54,533 people to resume its place as Boston's second largest neighborhood.

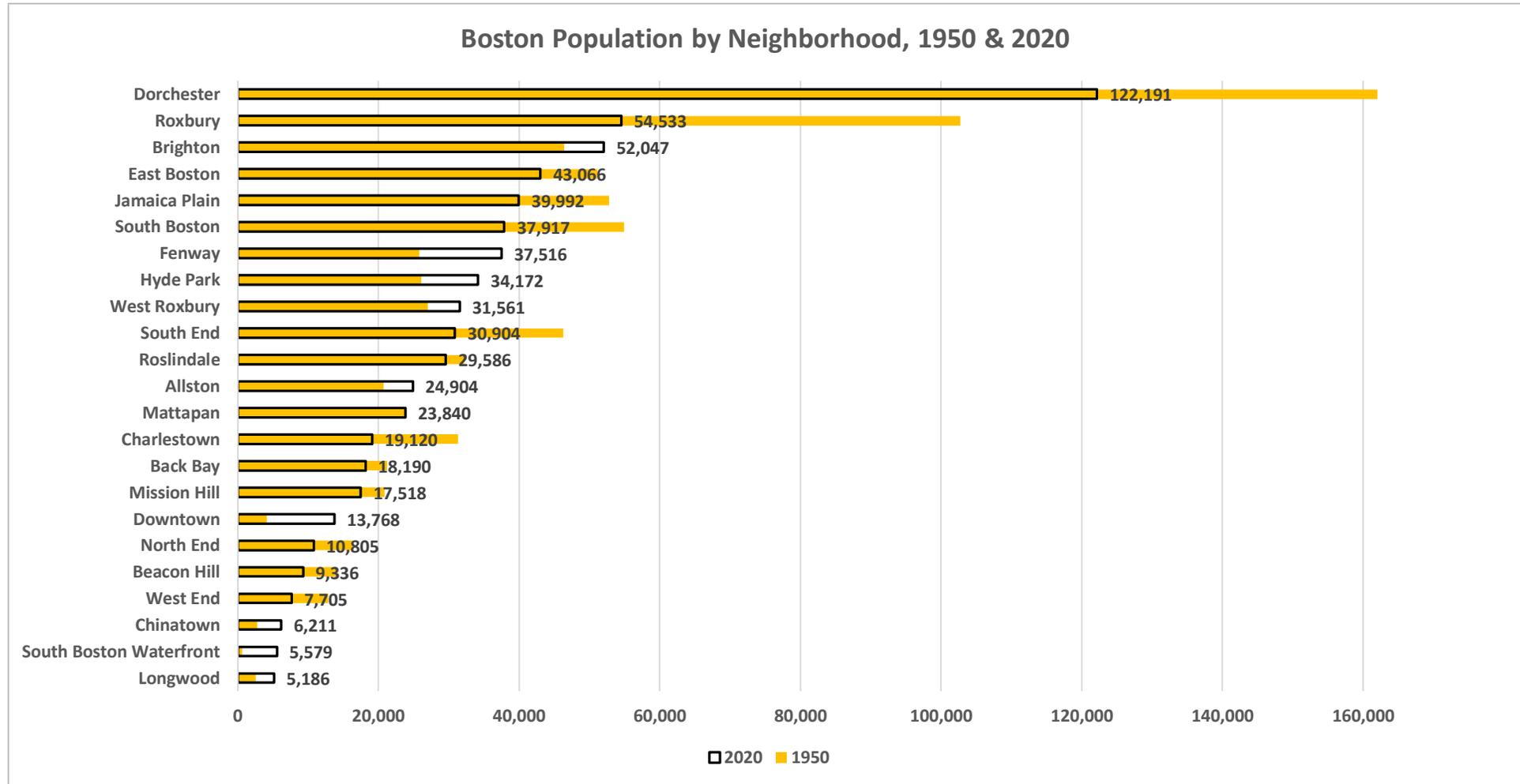


- The South Boston Waterfront and Downtown had small residential populations that have grown rapidly since 1980.
- Chinatown, the West End, and Longwood also had large percentage gains in population.



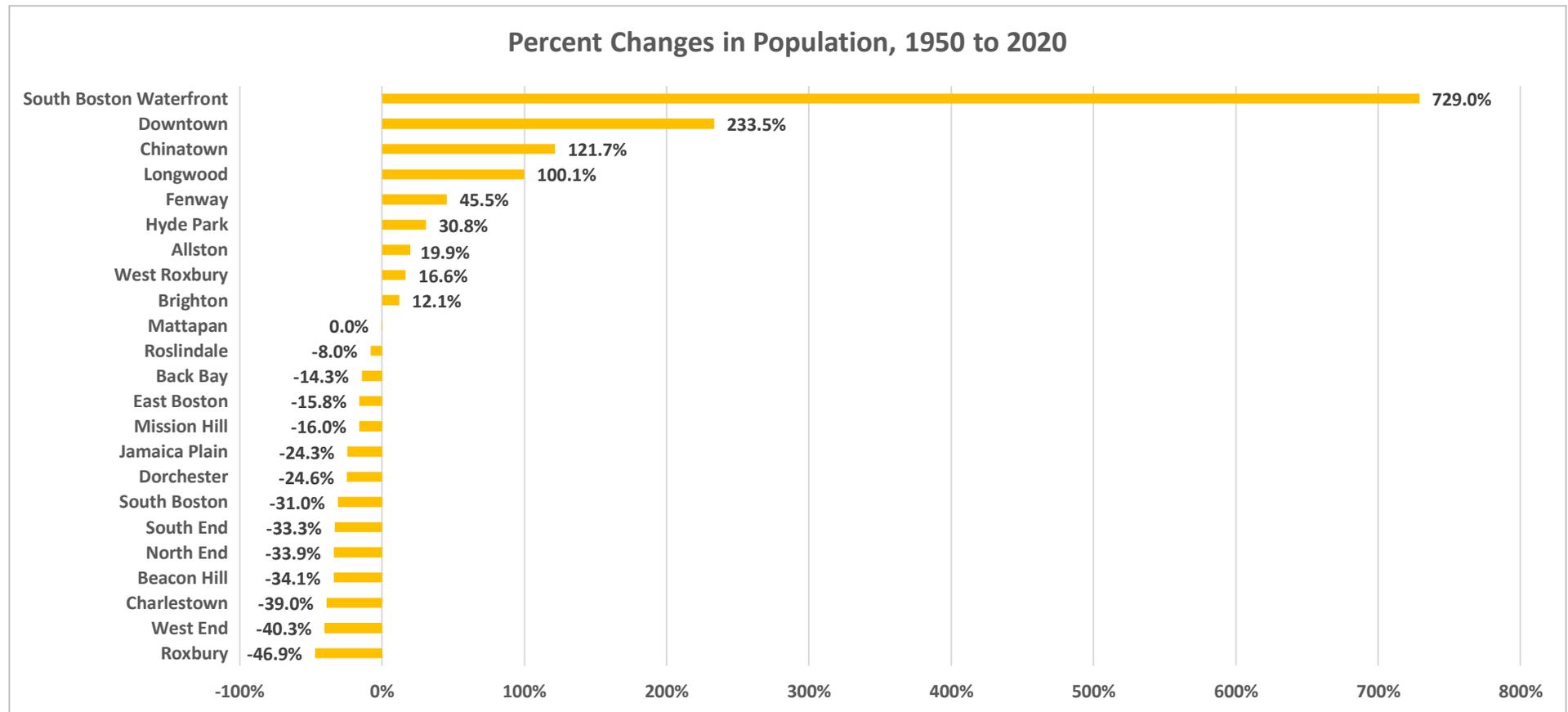
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 & 2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Between 1950 and 2020, over half of Boston's neighborhood gained population.
- Dorchester and Roxbury were the largest and second largest neighborhoods in 1950, and this remains the same in 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The South Boston Waterfront had the largest percentage gain since 1950, at over 700%.
- The smaller neighborhoods of Downtown, Chinatown, and Longwood gained over 100% of their population since 1950.
- Although Mattapan shows a 0% population change between 1950 and 2020, its population decreased slightly between 1950 and 1980 and increased between 1980 and 2020.
- Roxbury has lost almost 47% of its population since 1950.



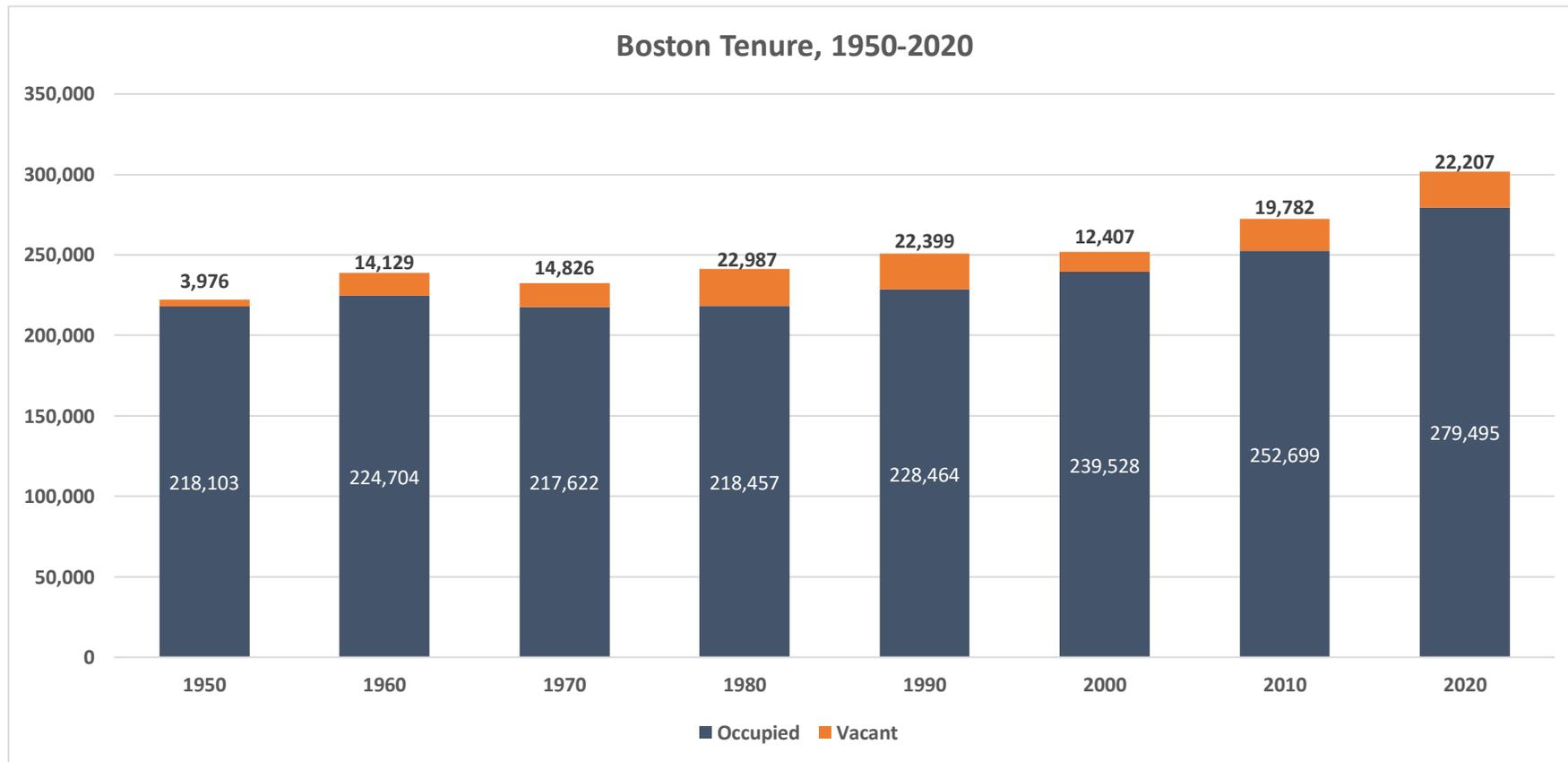
2.

HOUSING TRENDS



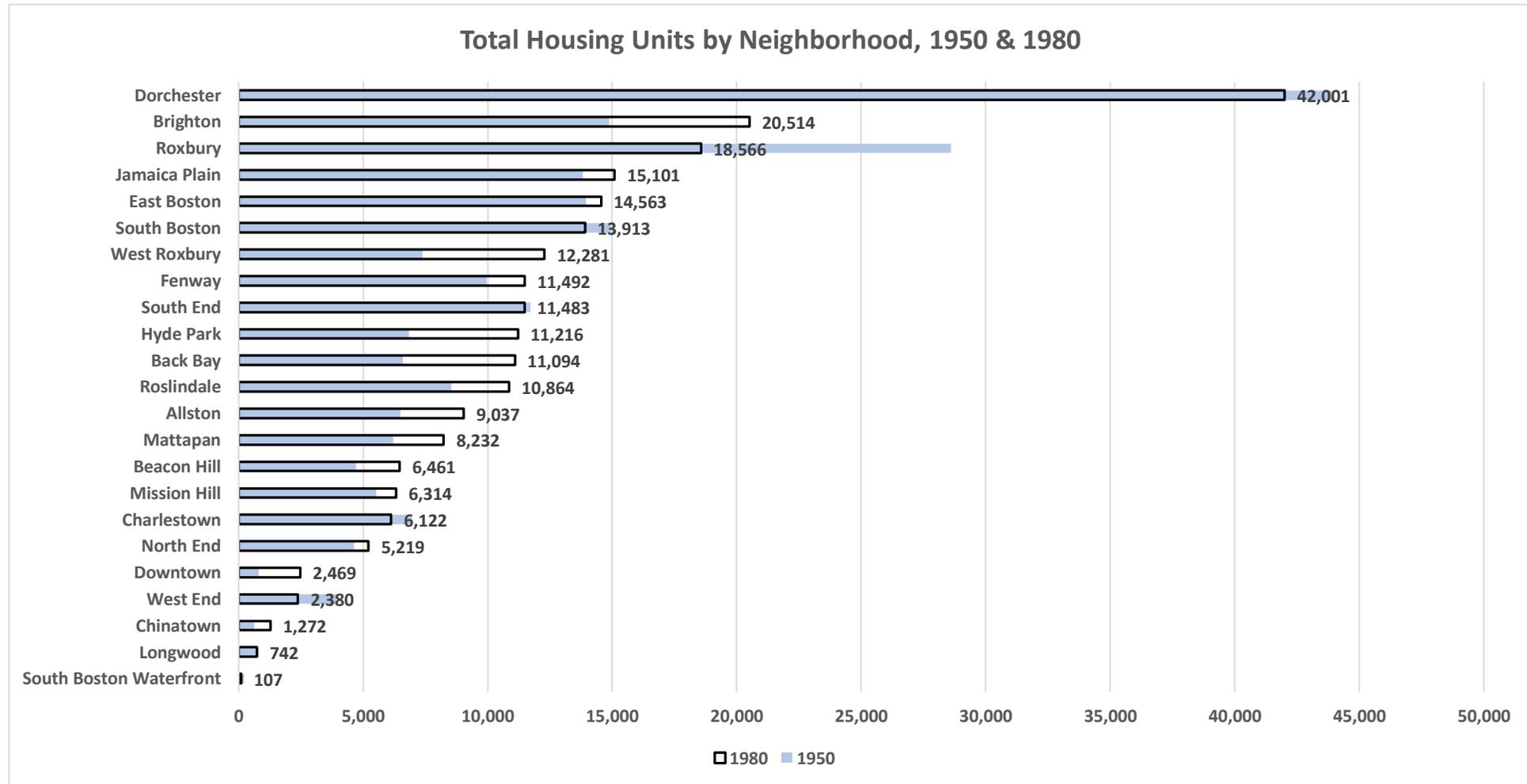
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- From 1950 to 1980, the number of occupied housing units in Boston remained roughly the same, despite the decline in population.
- From 1980 to 2020, occupied housing units rose by 61,038 units, an increase of 28%.

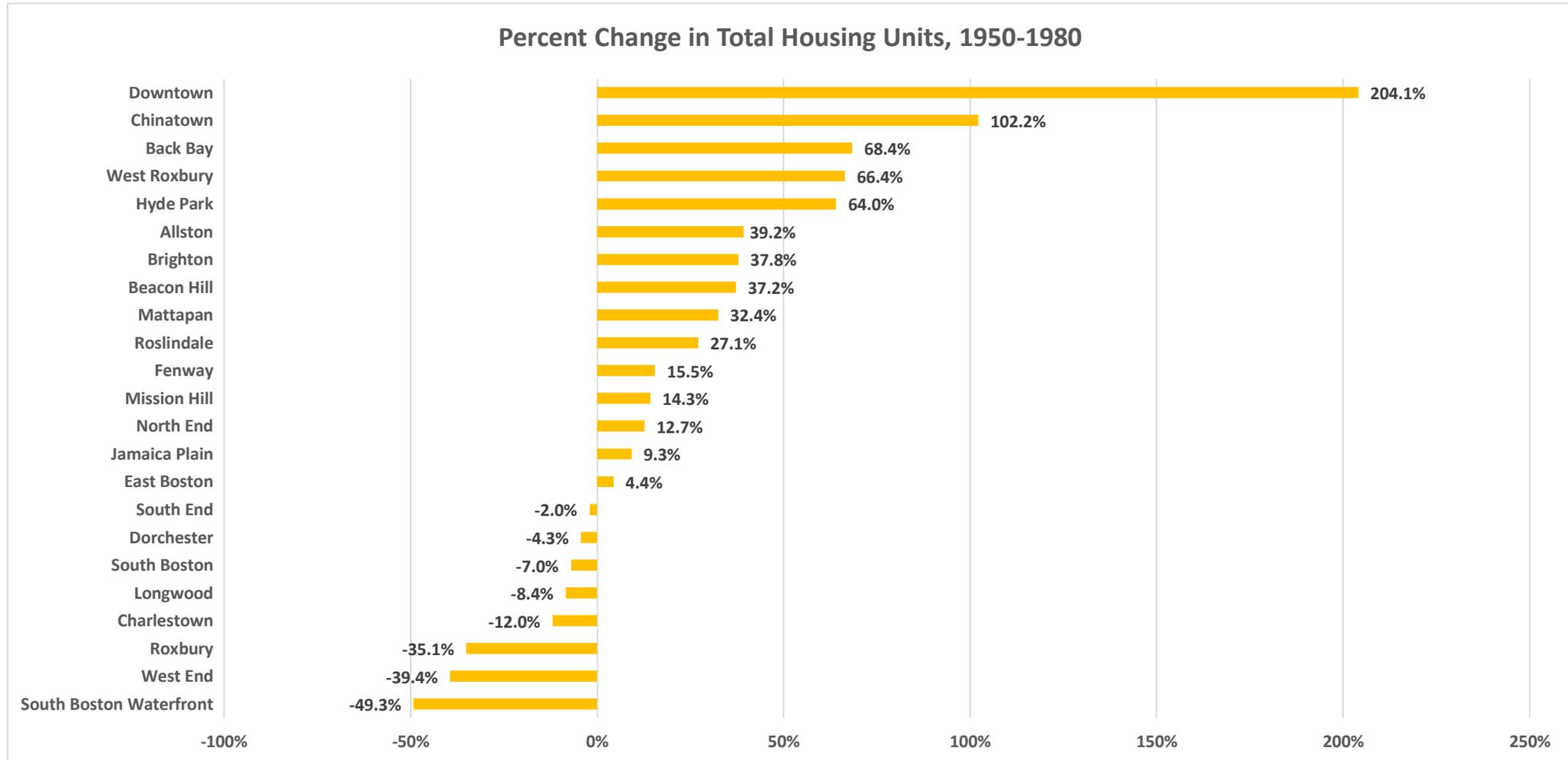


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Boston's total number of housing units (including vacant units) grew from 1950 to 1980, from 222,079 in 1950 to 241,444 in 1980.
- The citywide increase occurred despite large declines in units in some neighborhoods, especially Roxbury. Roxbury's total housing units declined from 28,607 to 18,566.

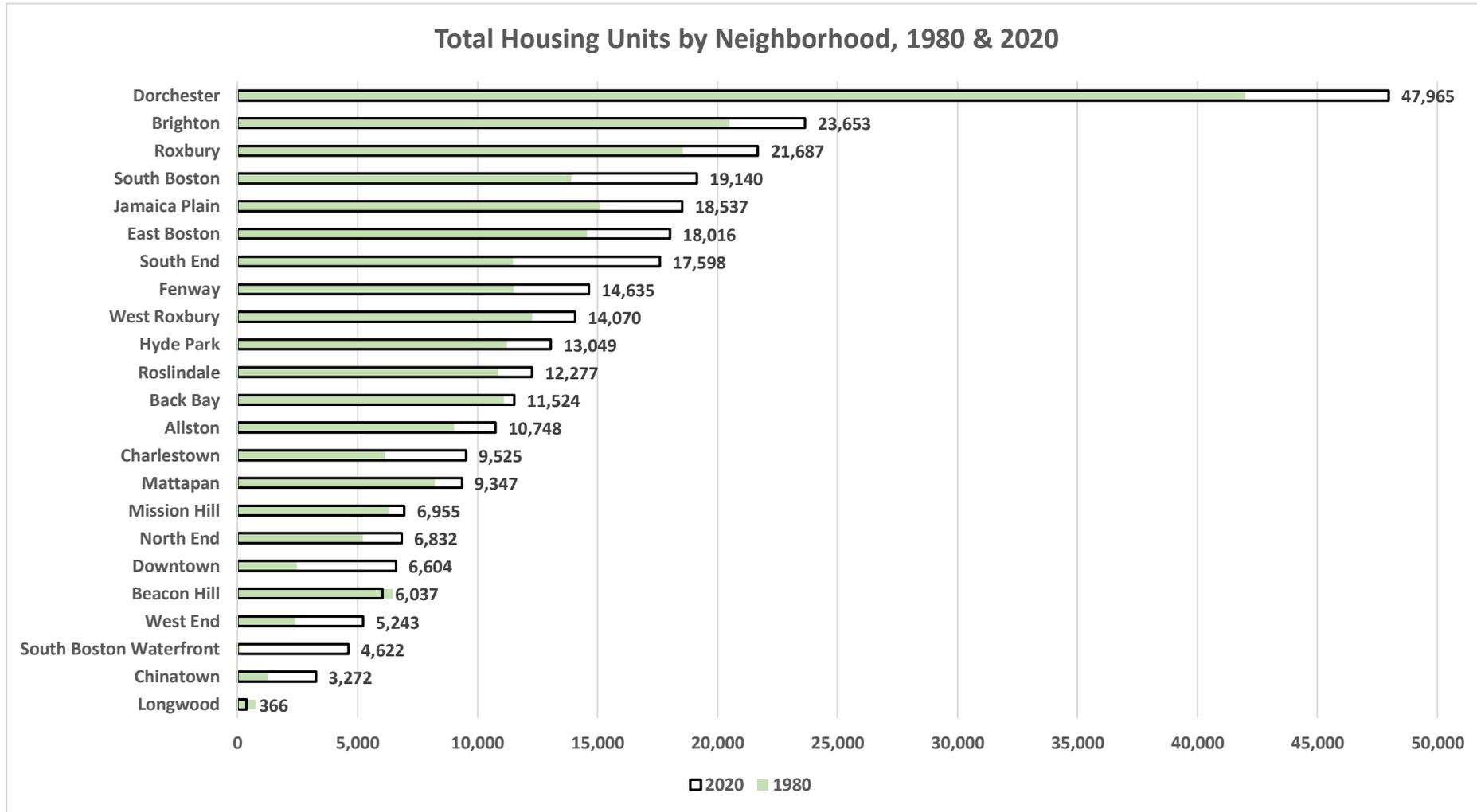


- In percentage terms, Downtown and Chinatown gained the most housing, both increasing over 100%.
- Back Bay, West Roxbury, and Hyde Park gained over 50% more housing.
- The South Boston Waterfront lost nearly 50% of its units, falling to just 100 units.



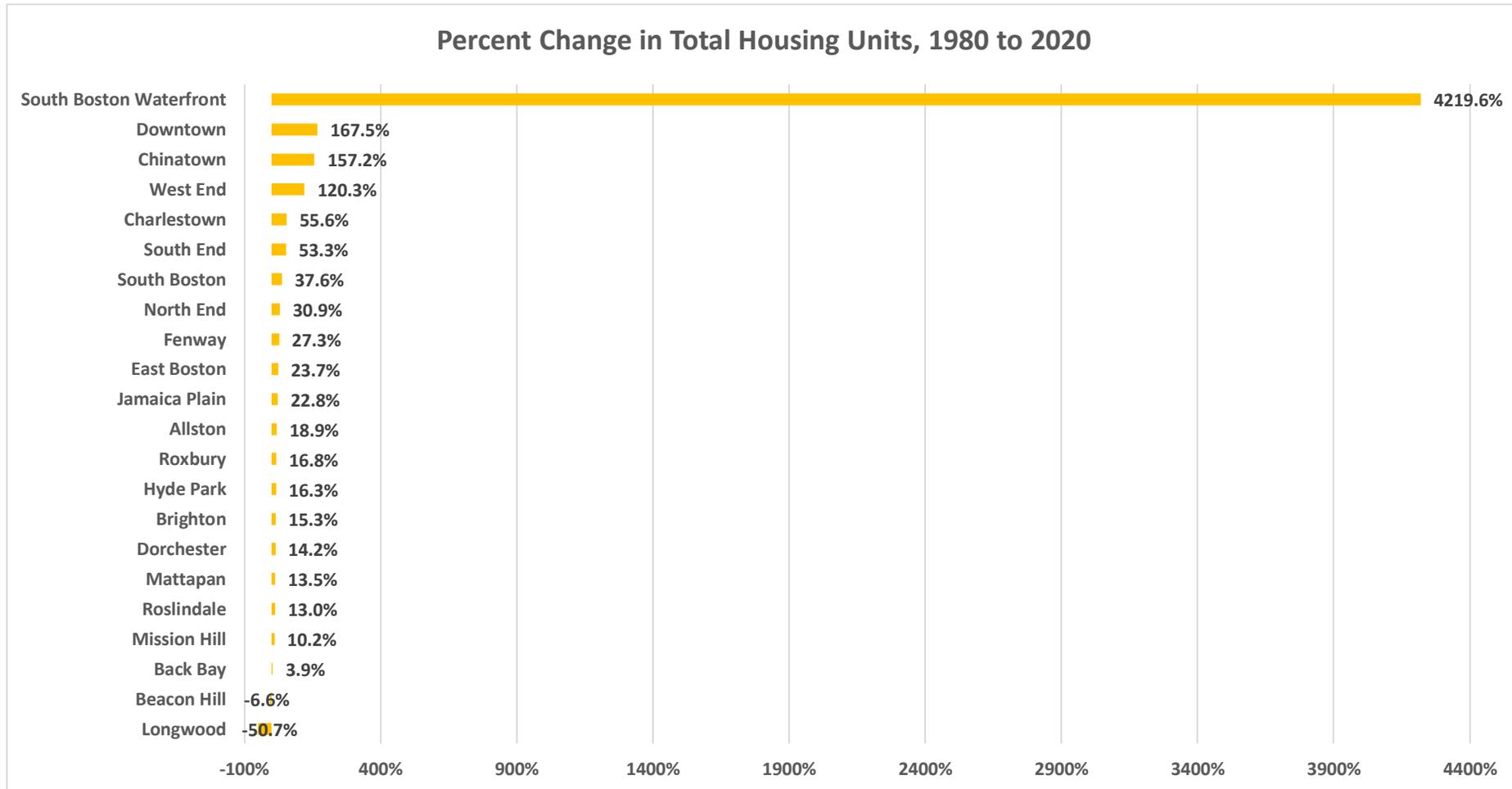
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 1980 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Boston’s housing units increased from 241,444 in 1980 to 301,702 in 2020.
- Dorchester’s housing increased to 47,965, exceeding 1950 levels.
- Roxbury reached 21,687 units, a significant increase over 1980, but still short of the 28,607 it had in 1950.

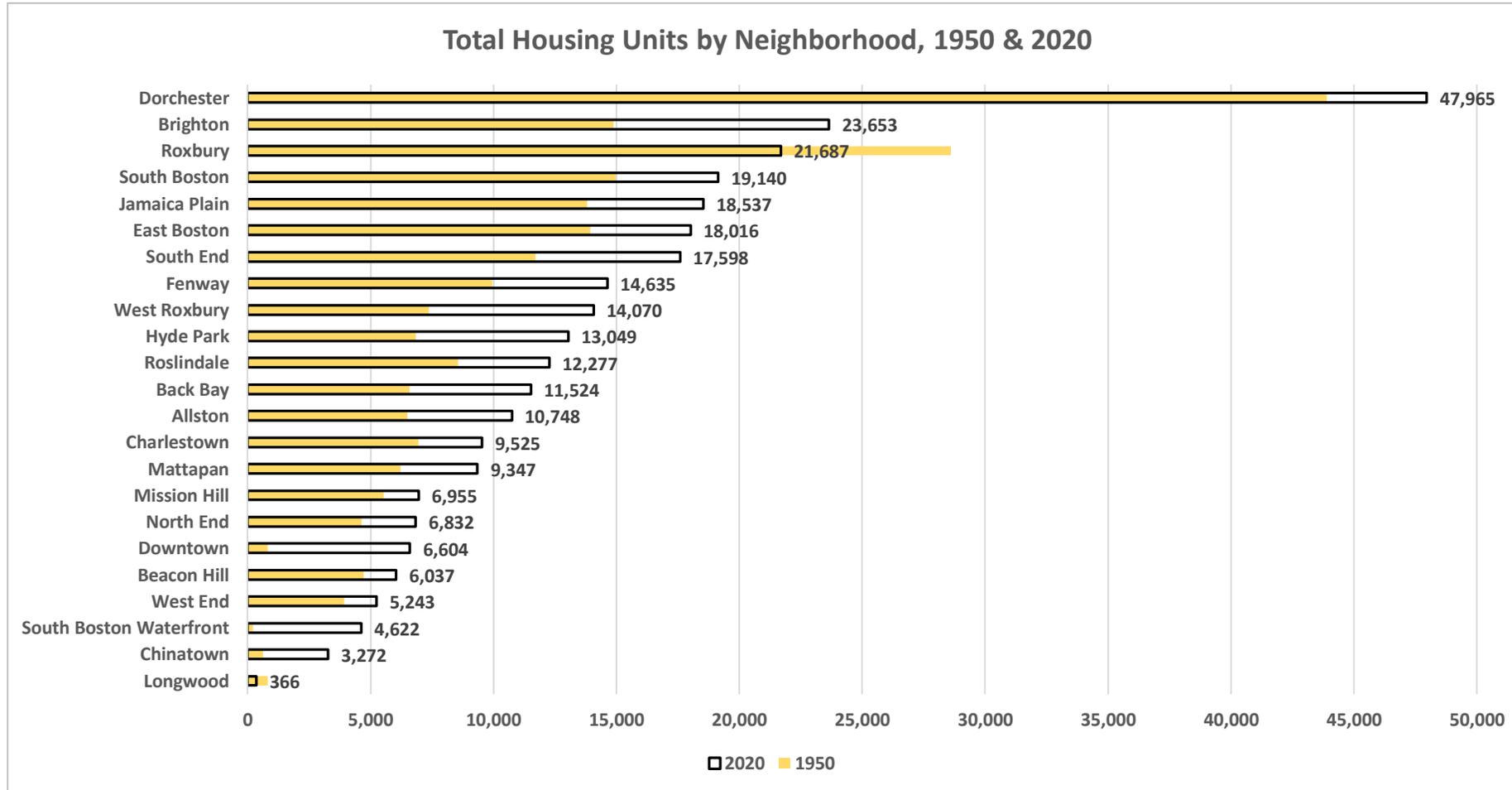


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 & 2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- After a 49% decrease in housing from 1950, the South Boston Waterfront had almost no housing in 1980.
- However, the South Boston Waterfront built 4,515 new units from 1980 to 2020, yielding a 4,220% increase in housing.
- After increasing over 200% in the earlier time period, housing in Downtown rose another 168% from 1980 to 2020, with 4,135 additional units.

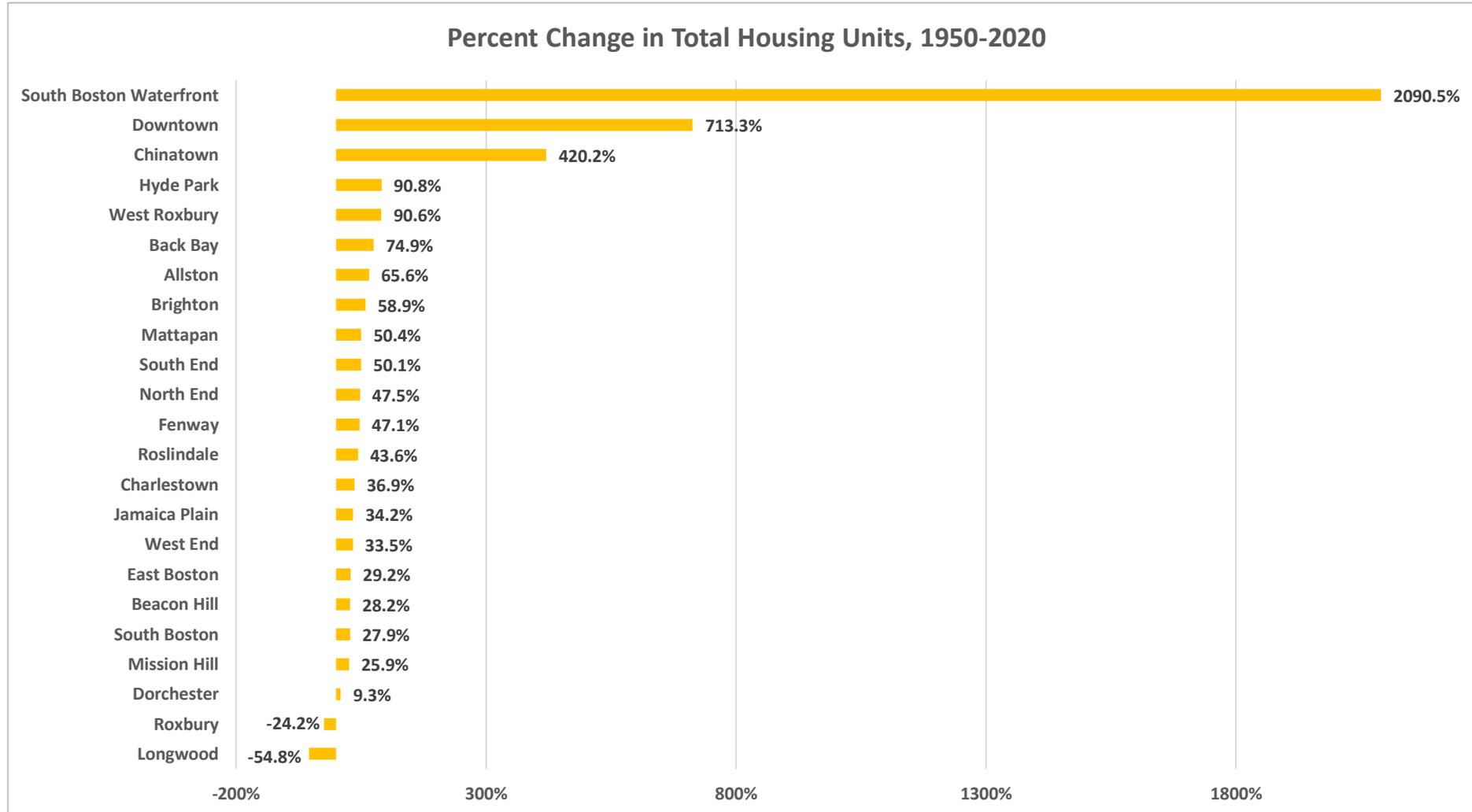


- Between 1950 and 2020, every neighborhood has increased its total housing units except Roxbury and Longwood.
- Despite having about 2,000 more residents, Roxbury has almost 2,000 less housing units than Brighton.
- Downtown, the South Boston Waterfront, and Chinatown have seen large increases in the amount of total housing units.



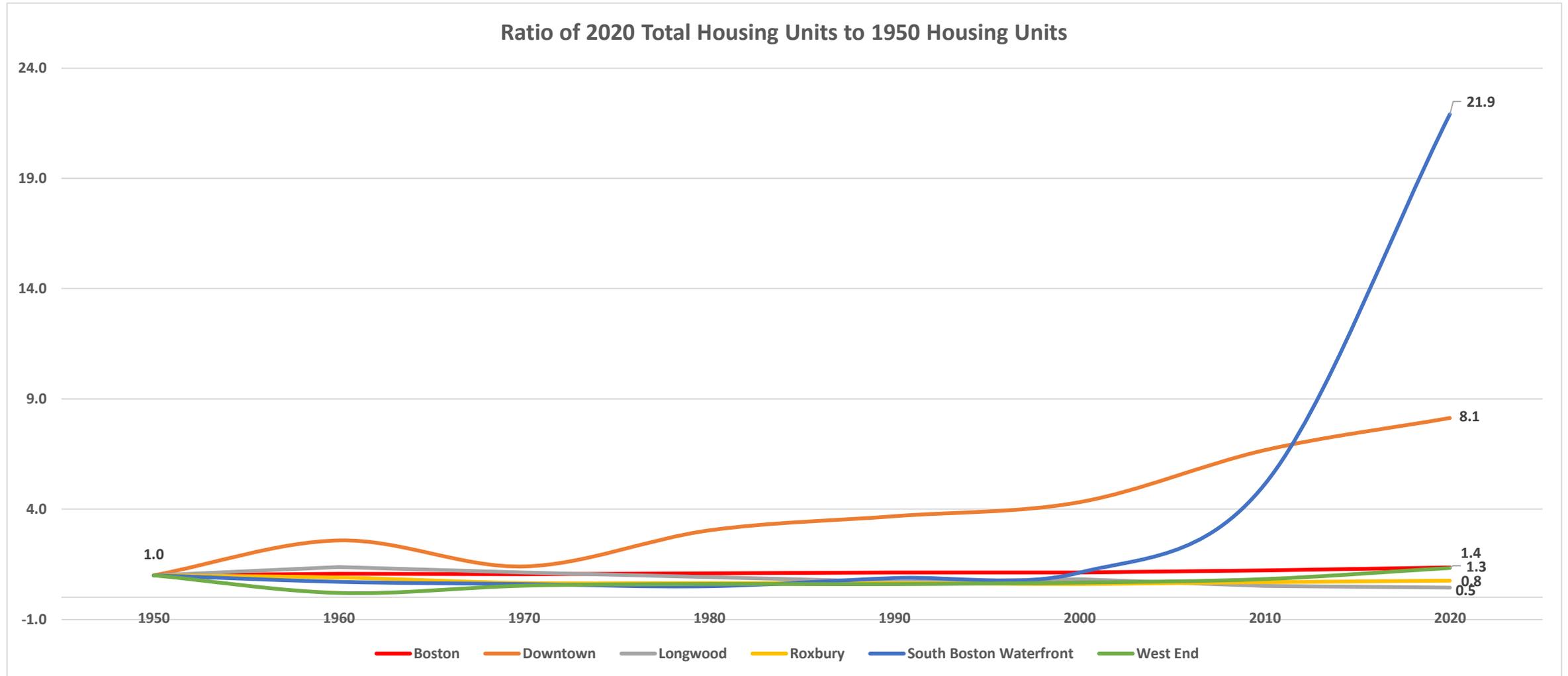
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The South Boston Waterfront, Downtown, and Chinatown had over 100% gain in housing units between 1950 and 2020.
- Hyde Park, West Roxbury, Back Bay, Allston, Brighton, and Mattapan gained over 50% more units.



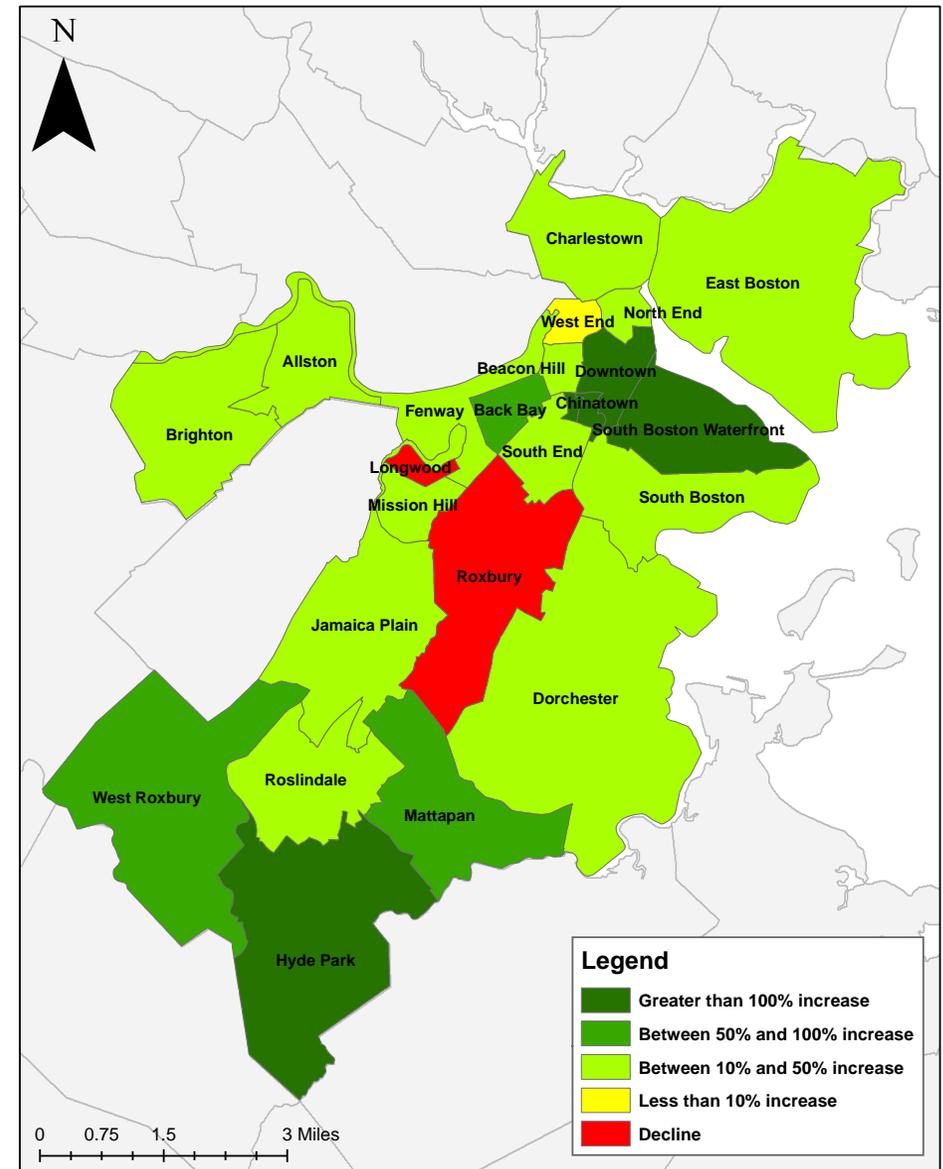
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- In 2020, Downtown had over 8 times as many housing units as in 1950 and the South Boston Waterfront has more than 20 times as many.
- In contrast, Roxbury had only 80% of the housing units it had in 1950.

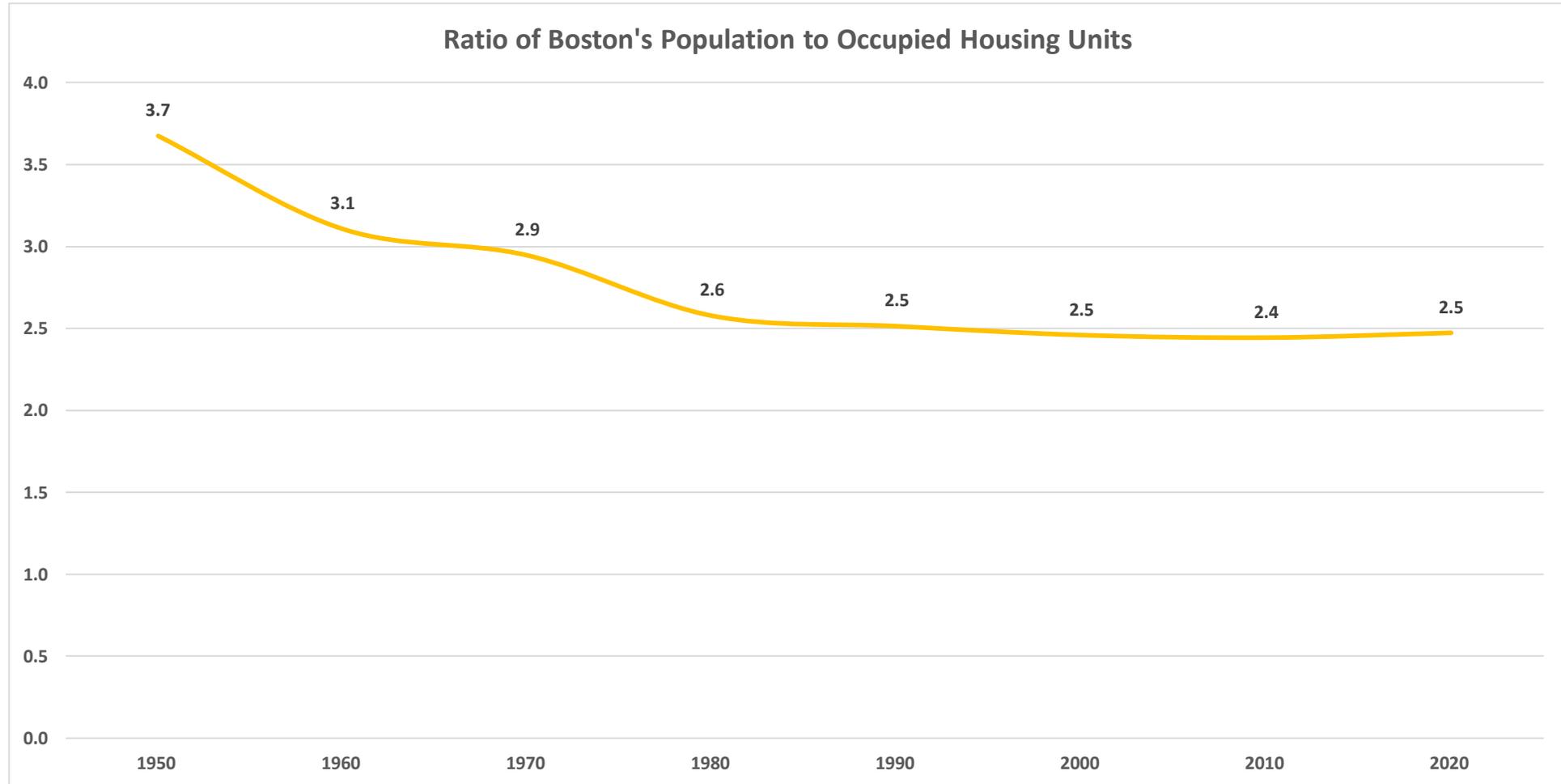


- Only two neighborhoods had fewer housing units in 2020 than in 1950: Roxbury and Longwood.
- Downtown, Chinatown, Hyde Park, and the South Boston Waterfront more than doubled their units in the 70 year period. All, however, had relatively few units in 1950.

Percent Change in Total Housing Units, 1950-2020

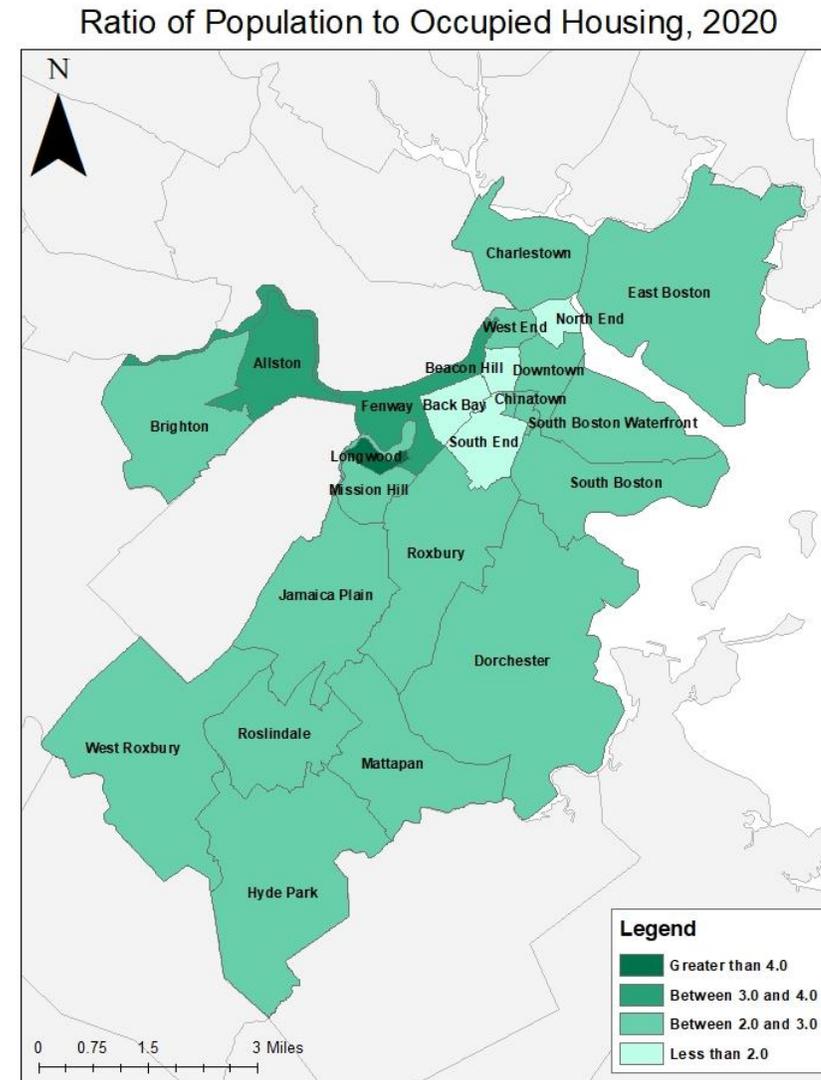
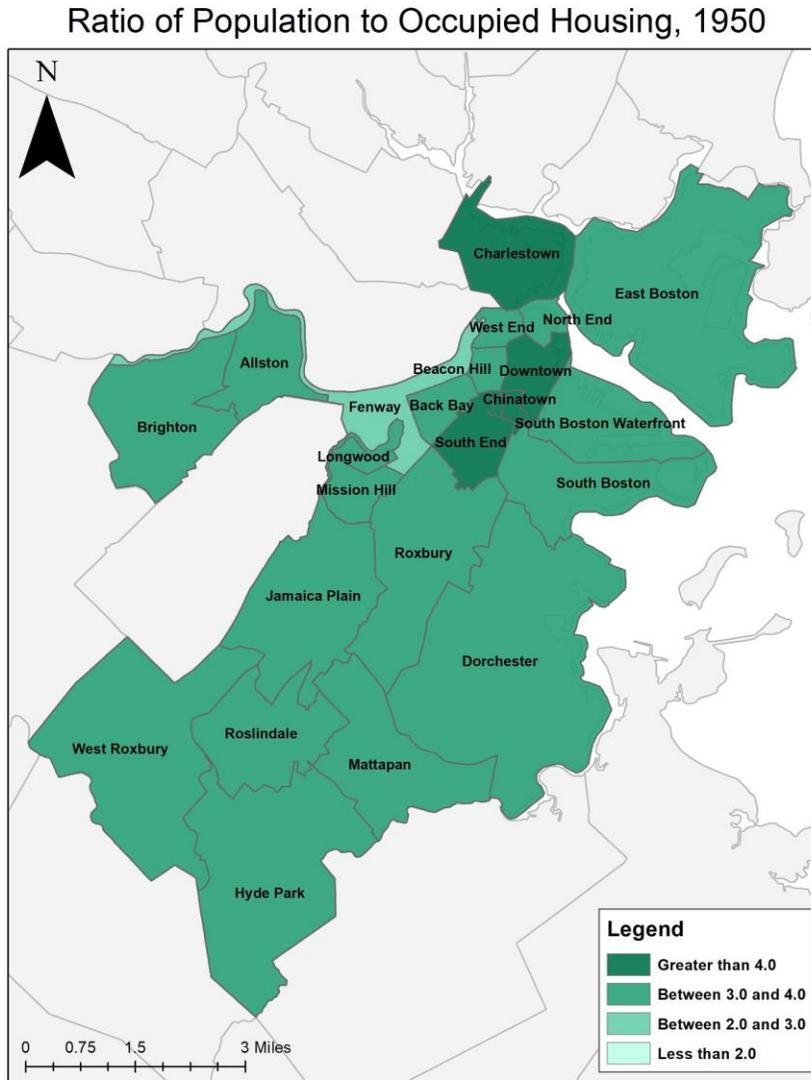


- The ratio of population to occupied housing units in Boston has fallen from 3.7 to 2.5 from 1950 to 2020.
- Following the population decline between 1950 and 1980, the ratio has remained relatively steady from 1980 to 2020.



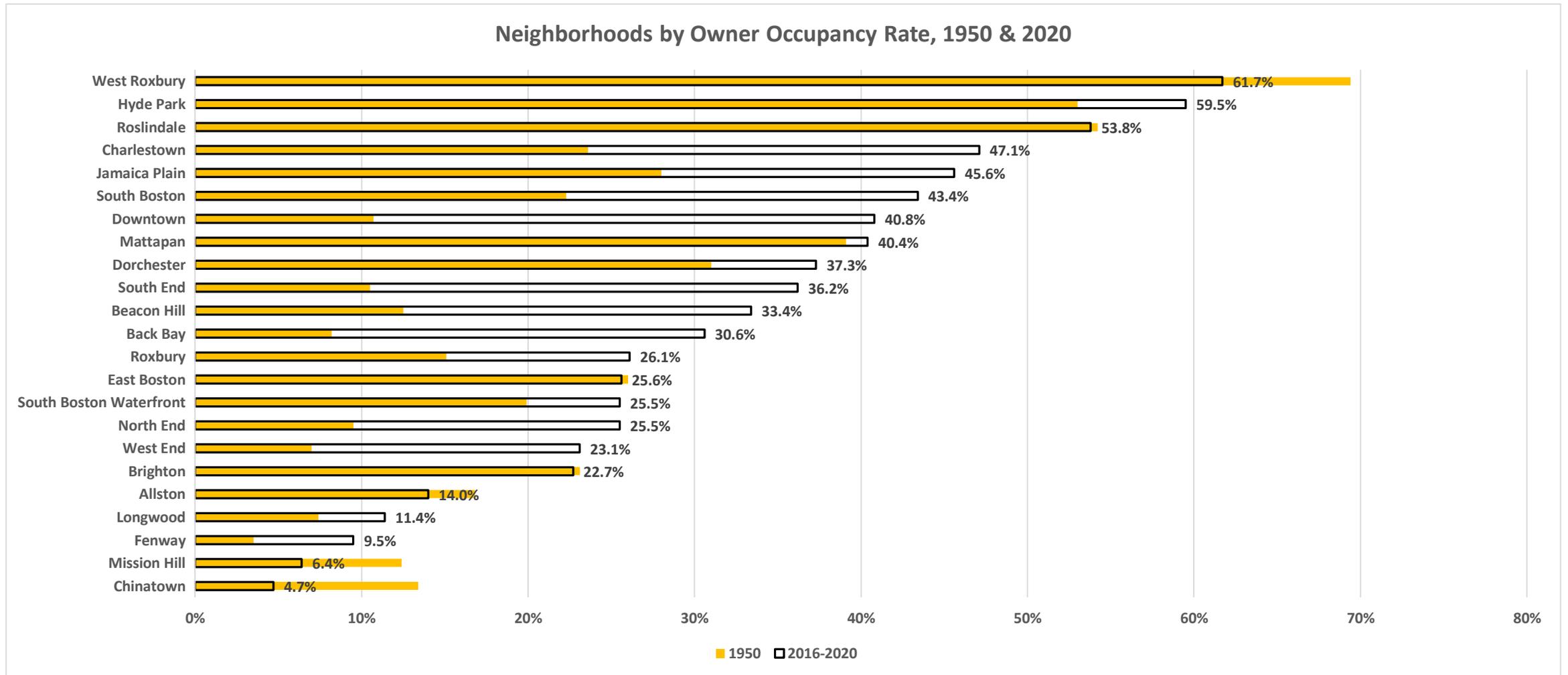
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Overall, the ratio of population to occupied housing was higher in 1950 than in 2020.
- Charlestown, Downtown, and Chinatown had the largest ratios in 1950.



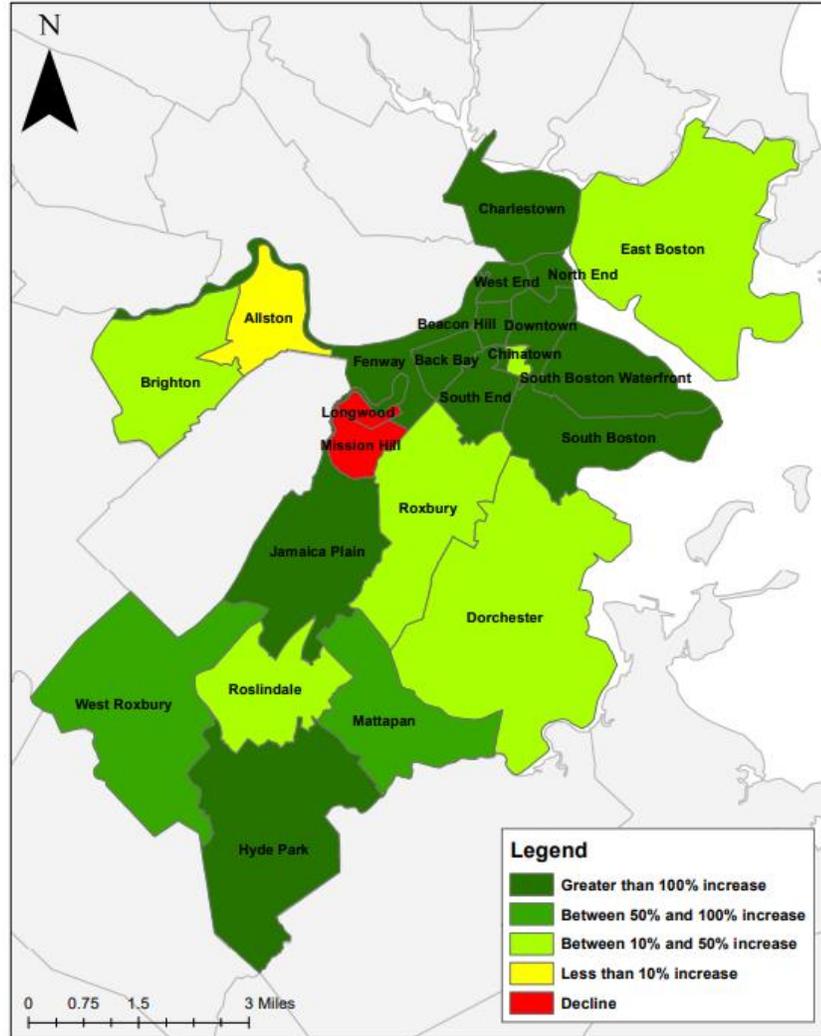
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 Decennial Census, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Since 1950, Boston's owner occupancy rate increased from 25% to 35%, still much lower than the U.S. rate of 64%.
- West Roxbury and Hyde Park have the highest rates of owner occupancy in 2020.
- Owner occupancy has increased dramatically in Downtown, Back Bay, the South End, and the West End
- Owner occupancy has fallen slightly in Chinatown, Mission Hill, Allston, and West Roxbury

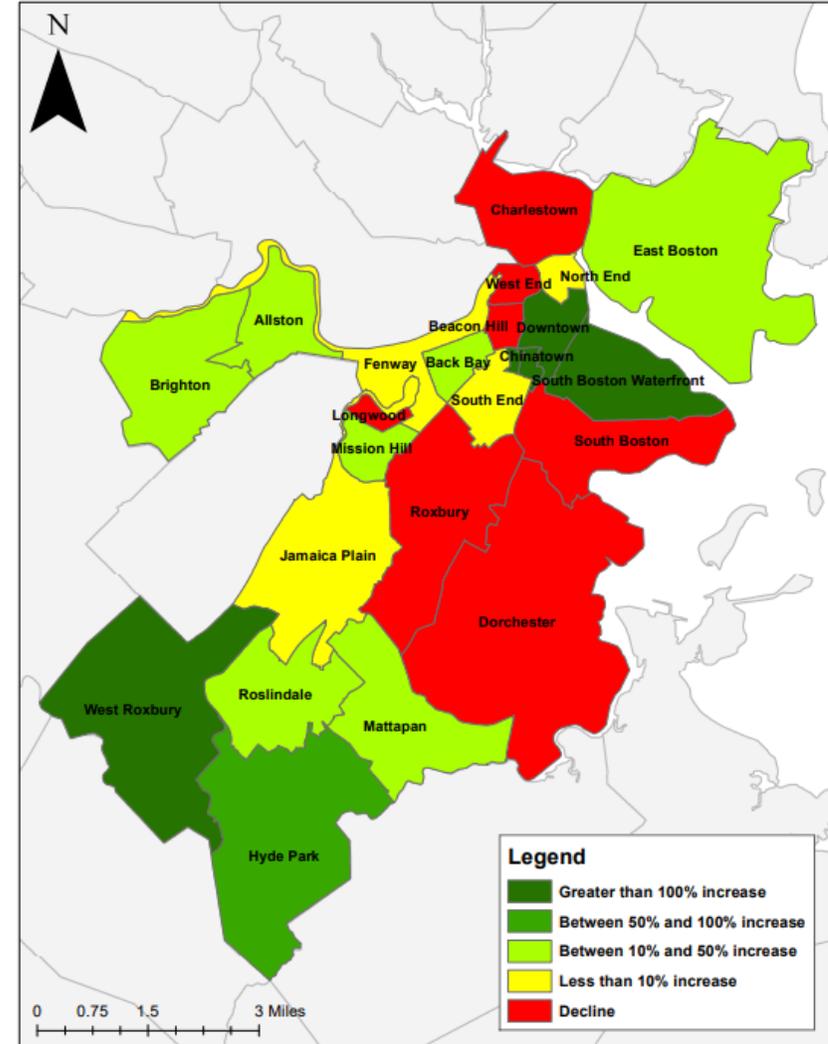


- From 1950 to 2020, owner-occupied housing grew rapidly in the neighborhoods surrounding Chinatown.
- Several neighborhoods saw a decline in renter-occupied housing from 1950 to 2020.
- Longwood, which lost units between 1950 and 2020, saw a decline in both owner and renter occupied housing.

Percent Change in Owner-Occupied Housing, 1950-2020



Percent Change in Renter-Occupied Housing, 1950-2020



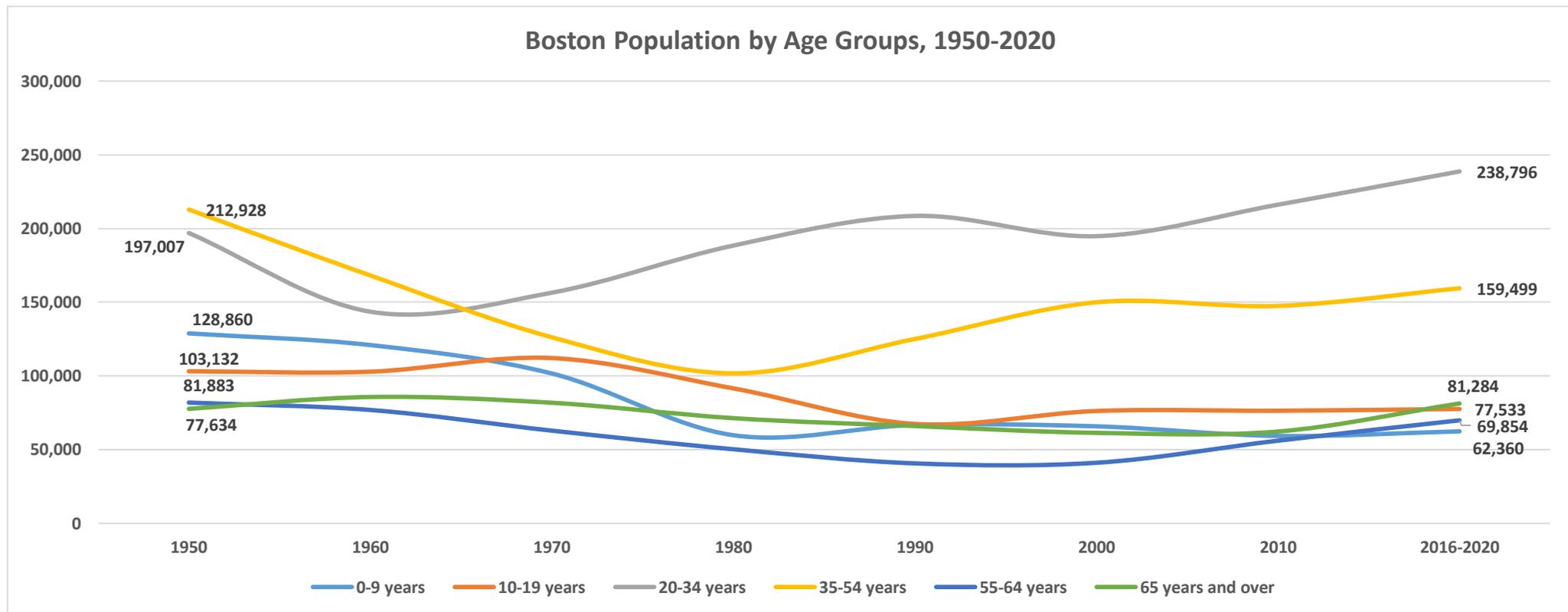
3.

AGE DISTRIBUTION TRENDS



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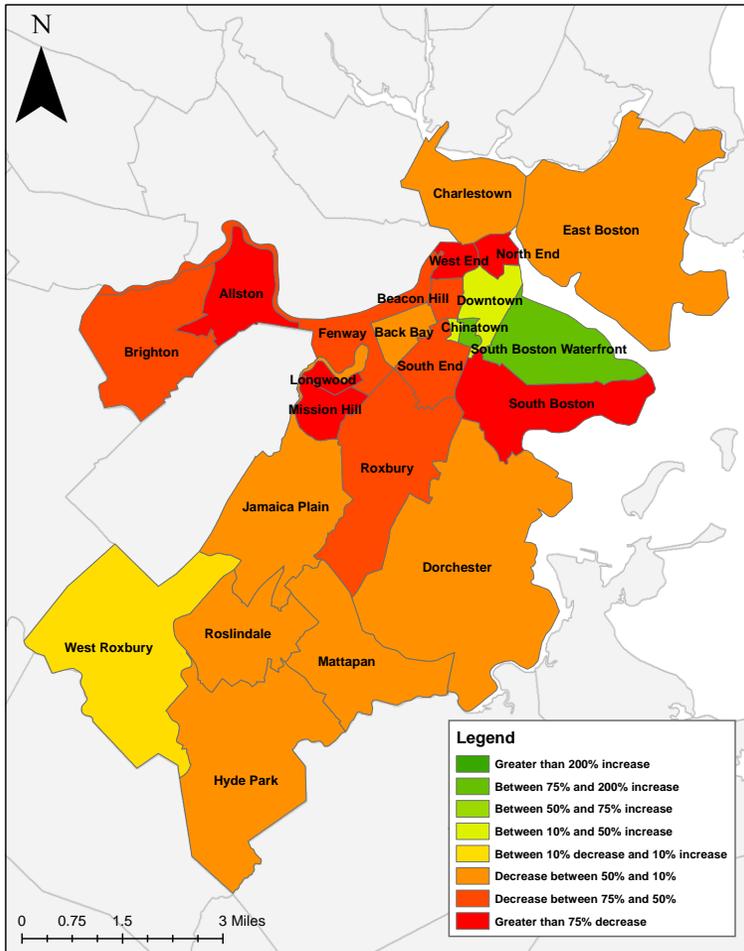
- The young adult (aged 20 to 34) population in Boston has an overall upward trend, but experienced decreases in 1960 and 2000.
- The aged 0-9 population has fallen between 1950 and 2000 and is now the population category with the lowest share.
- The elderly population declined between 1960 and 2010 but has been on the rise since.
- The 35-54 year-old category experienced a period of decline between 1950 and 1980.



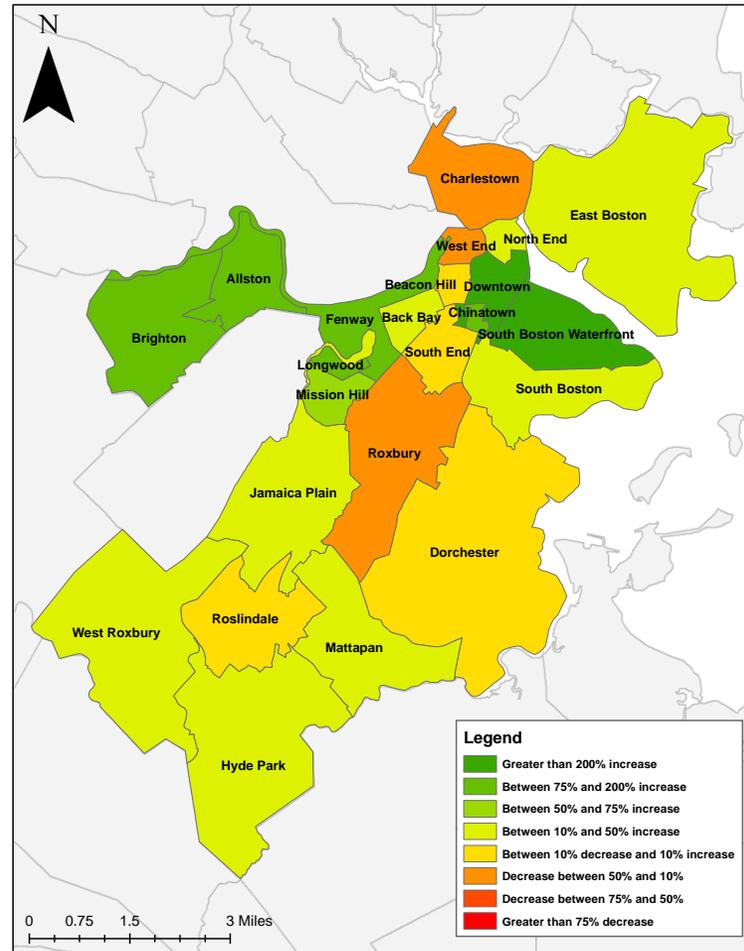
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The population aged 0 to 9 declined in most neighborhoods from 1950 to 2020, only increasing over 10% in Chinatown and the South Boston Waterfront.
- The young adult population (20 to 34) grew fastest in the college neighborhoods (Allston, Brighton, Fenway), and the urban core.
- Seniors grew fastest in the outer residential neighborhoods in the southern part of the City and in Downtown.

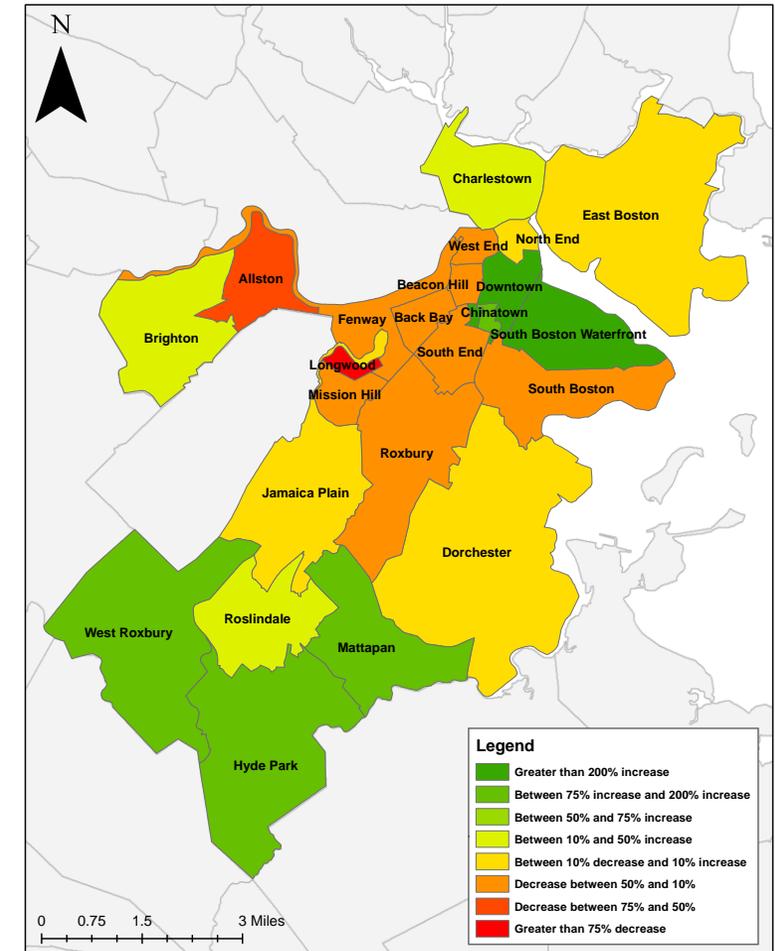
Percent Change in Population Age 0-9, 1950-2020



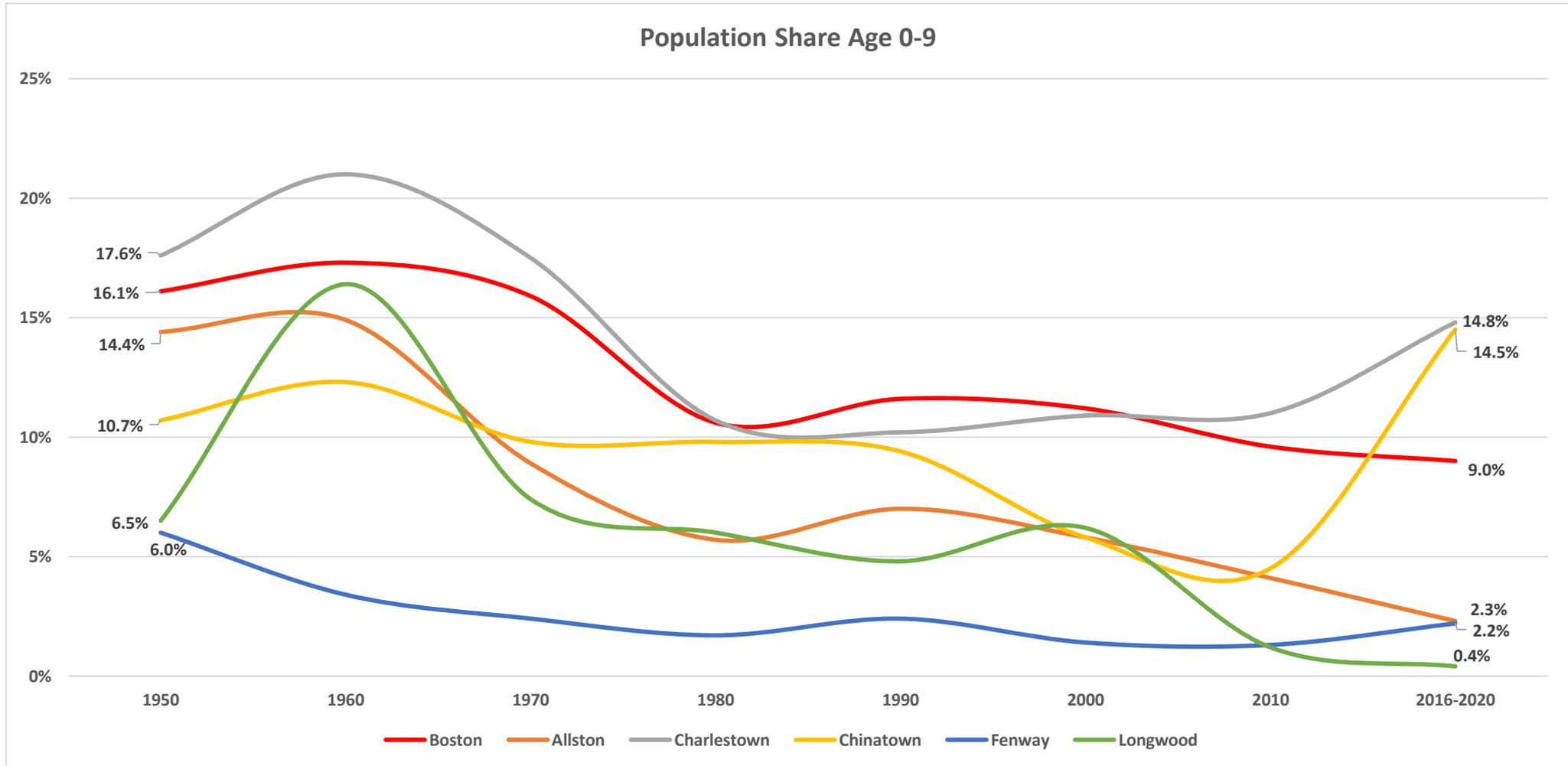
Percent Change in Population Age 20-34, 1950-2020



Percent Change in Population Age 65+, 1950-2020

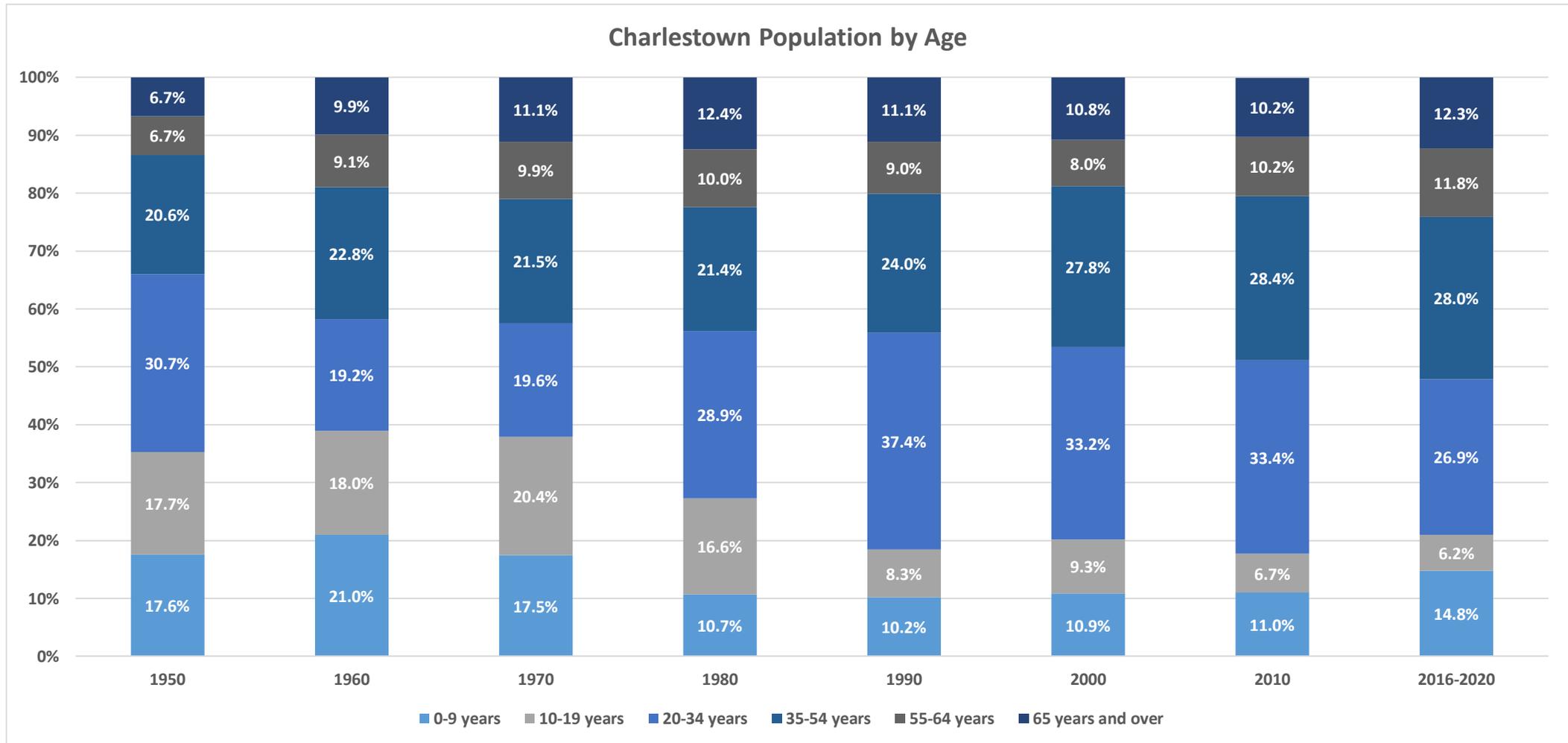


- The share of children, birth to age nine, fell from 16% to 9% of the city's population from 1950 to 2020.
- In Allston, the population share of young children fell from 14% to 2%.
- Longwood has almost no young children – lower than 1% share.



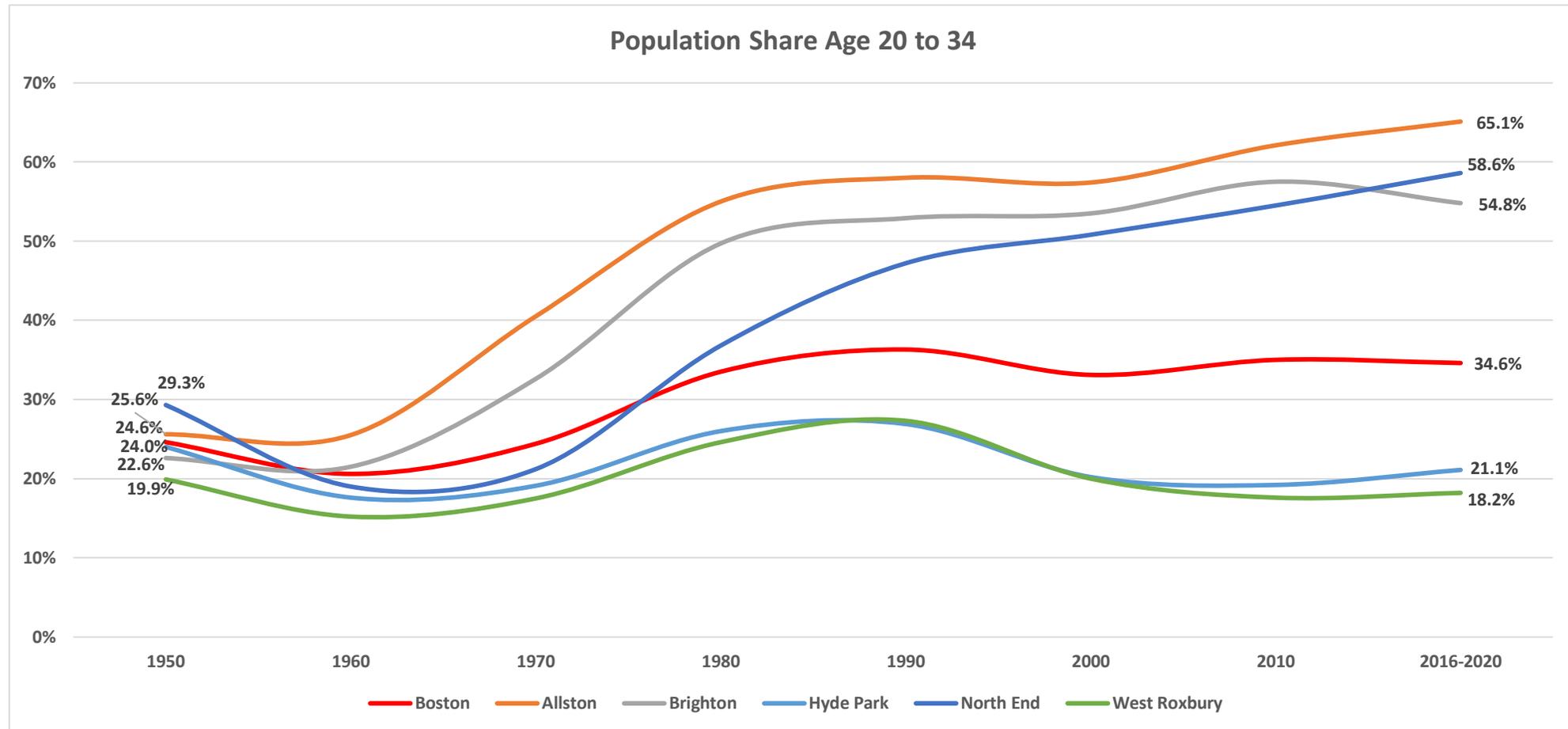
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Charlestown is currently the Boston neighborhood with the highest share of children birth to age nine at 15%.
- The share of young children in Charlestown declined from 1950 to 1990, but has been since rising.
- However, Charlestown has a small share of 10-19 year olds – only 6% compared to 18% in 1950.



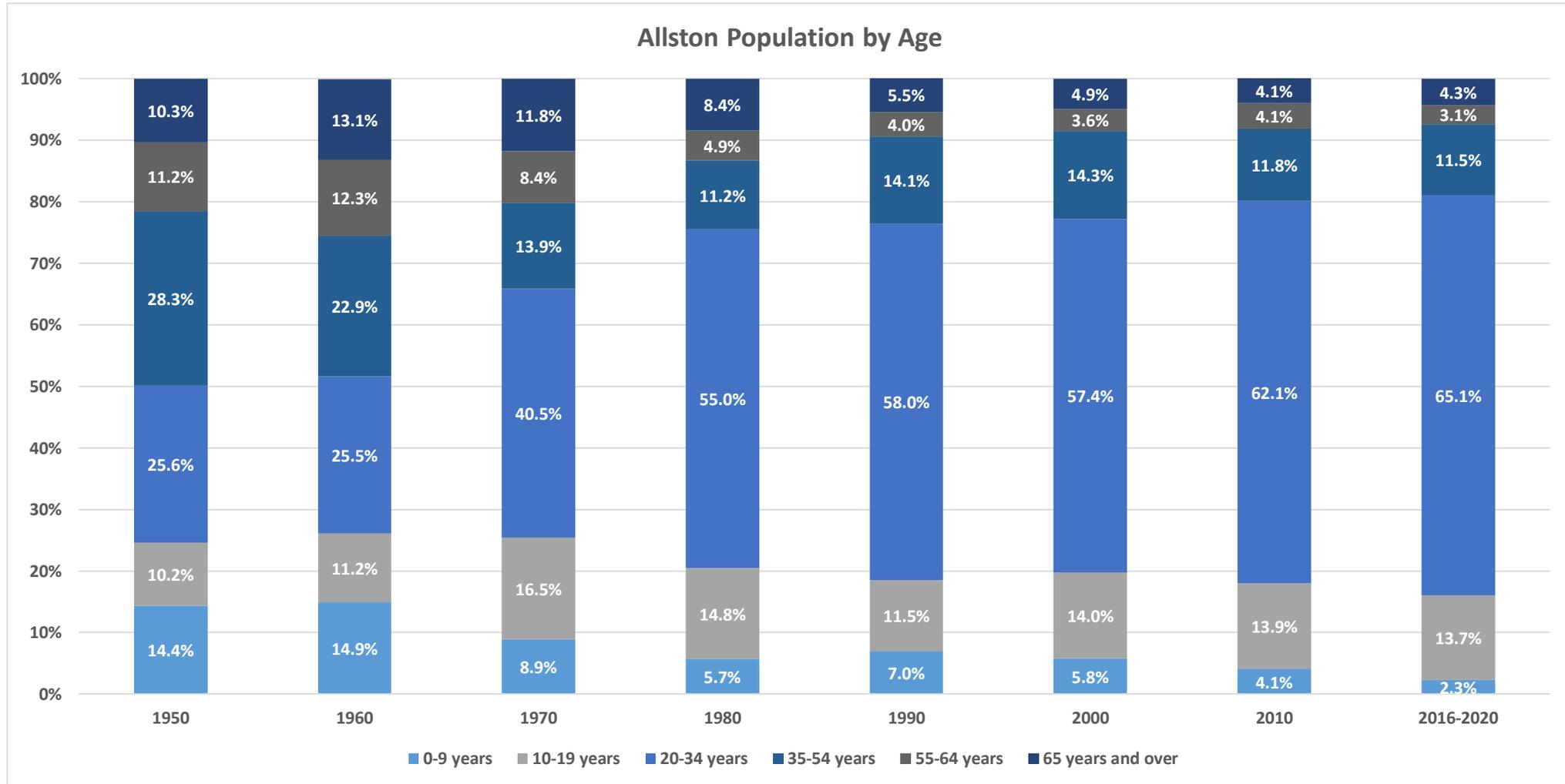
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The population share of young adults aged 20 to 34 in Boston has increased since 1950, from 25 percent to 35 percent of the city as a whole.
- In 1950, residents aged 20 to 34 made up between 20% and 30% of residents of almost all Boston neighborhoods.
- In 2020, over half of the populations of Allston and Brighton were between the ages of 20 and 34.
- Meanwhile, the young adult share of West Roxbury's population has fallen to 18%.



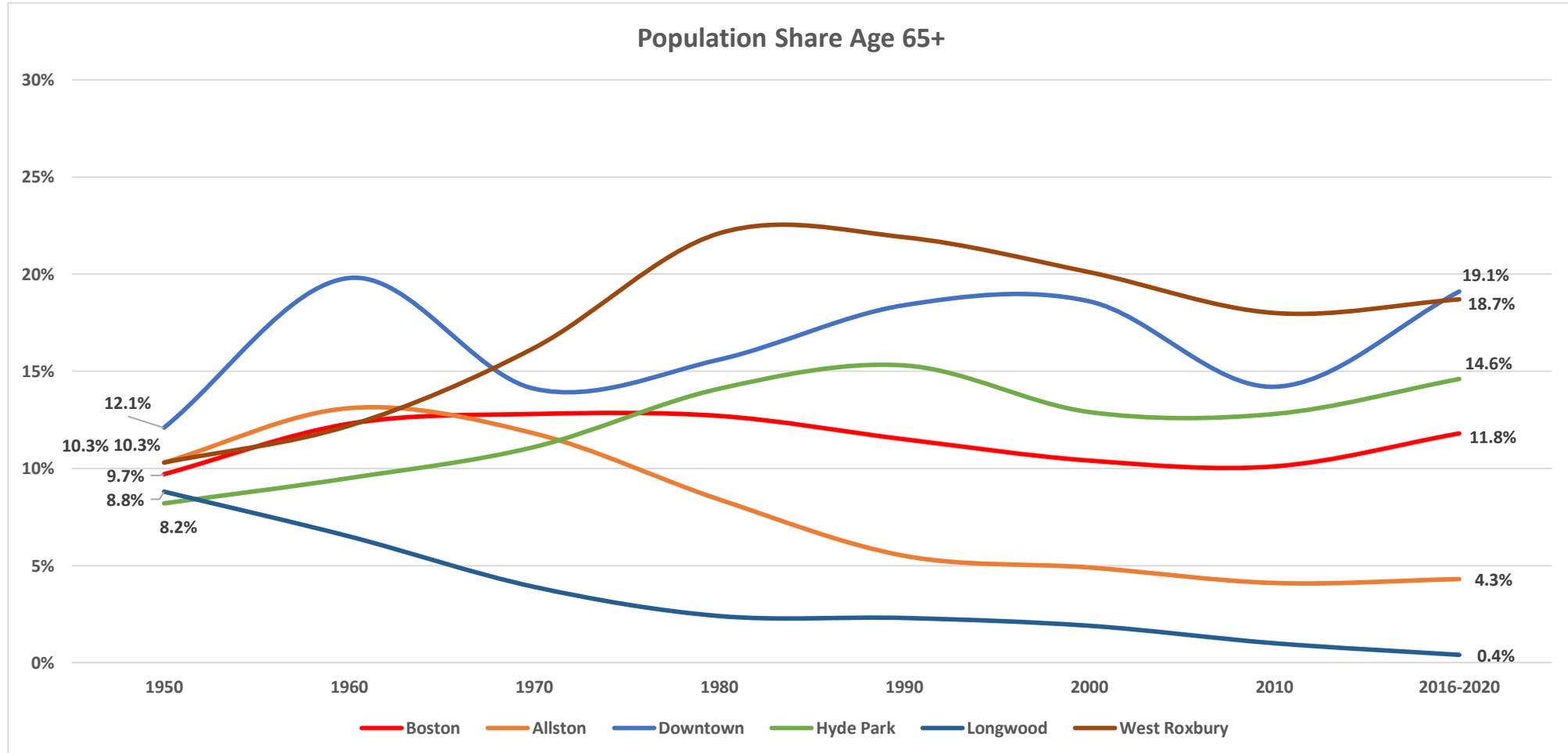
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Allston’s age distribution has changed from a balanced mix in 1950 to a large share of young adults in 2020.
- 65% of Allston’s population is between 20 and 34 years old.
- Allston has very few young children or older adults- children under 10, adults 55-64, and seniors 65 and over each make up less than 4.5% of the Allston population.



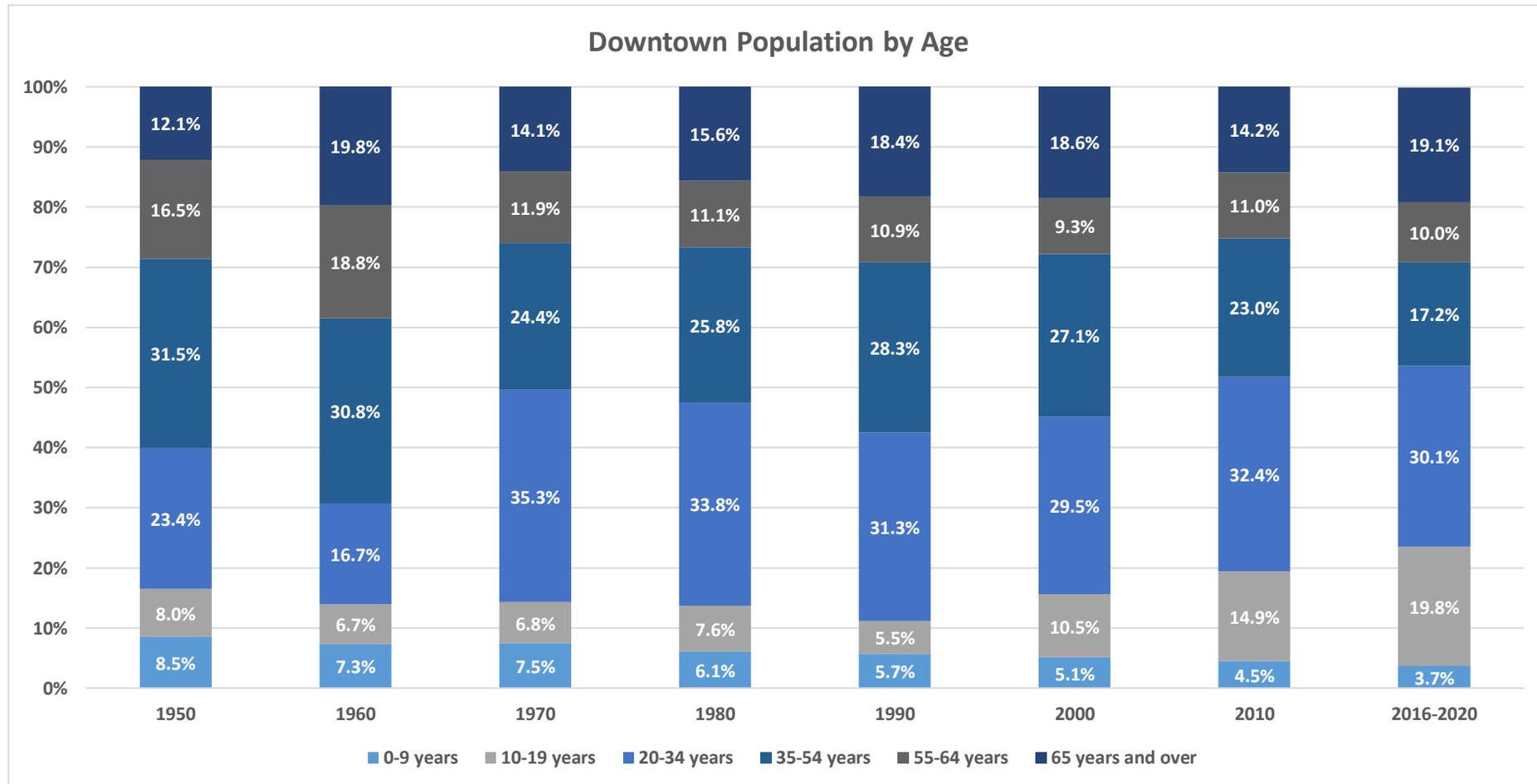
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The share of Boston's population that is aged 65+ has stayed about the same since 1950, ranging from 10% to 12%.
- The elderly share in West Roxbury rose to a peak of 22% in 1980 before falling to 19%.
- Downtown has the largest elderly share, at 19%.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The elderly share in Downtown has been increased by 7% since 1950.
- The share of young children in Downtown has declined since 1950, but the share of children ages 10-19 has gone up in turn.
- Downtown's largest population share is held by young adults ages 20-24.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

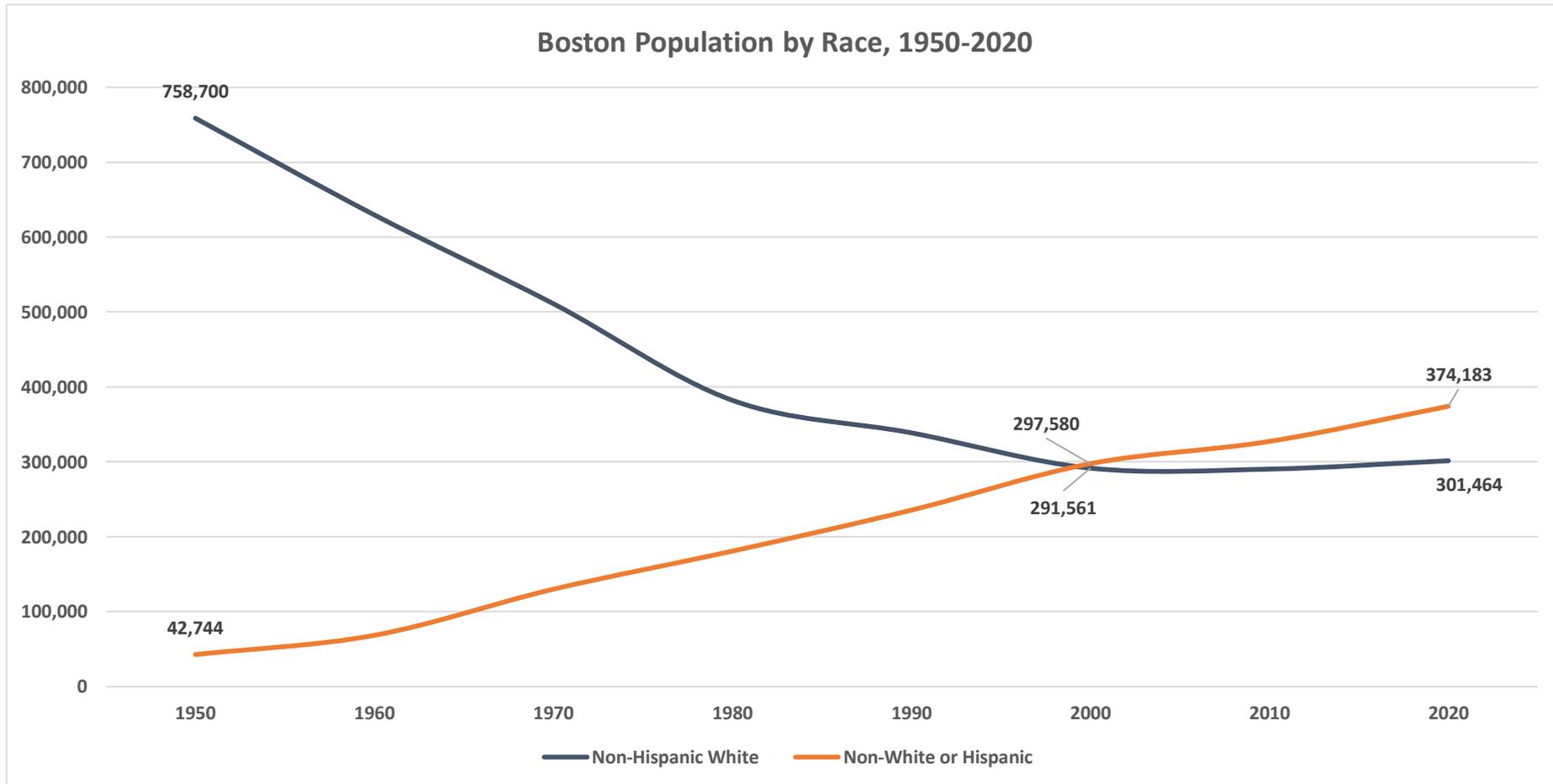
4.

TRENDS in RACE & ETHNICITY



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- In 1950, Boston was only 5.3% non-White, but Boston’s Hispanic and non-White populations have grown consistently since then.
- Boston’s non-Hispanic White population fell from 1950 to 2000, before a small increase to 2020.
- Boston became a majority-minority city in 2000, and by 2020, Boston was 55.4% Hispanic or non-White.

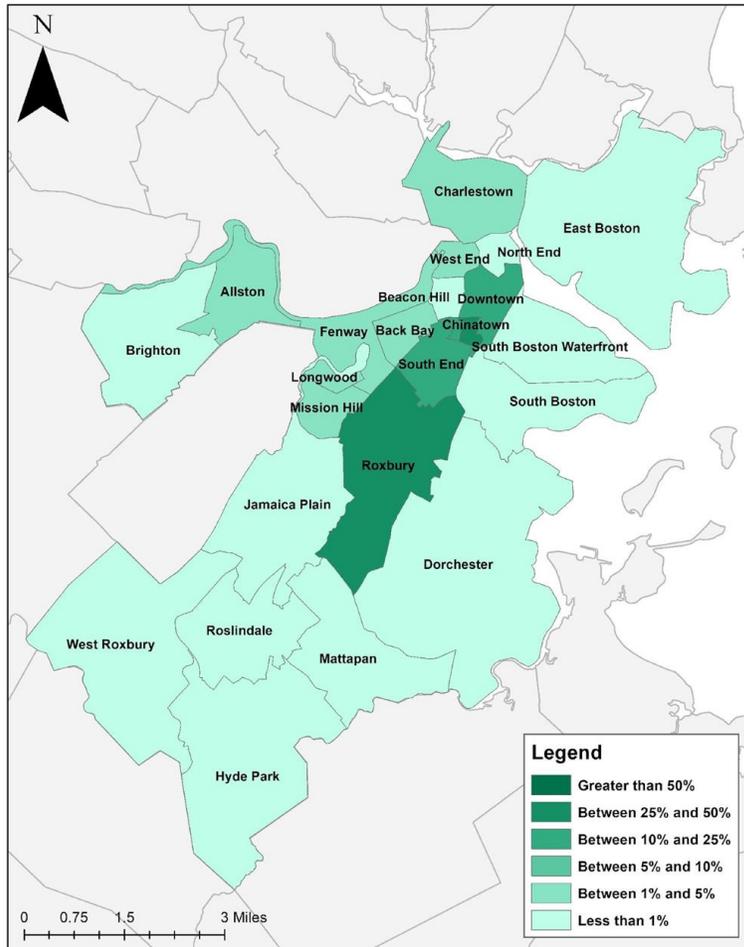


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

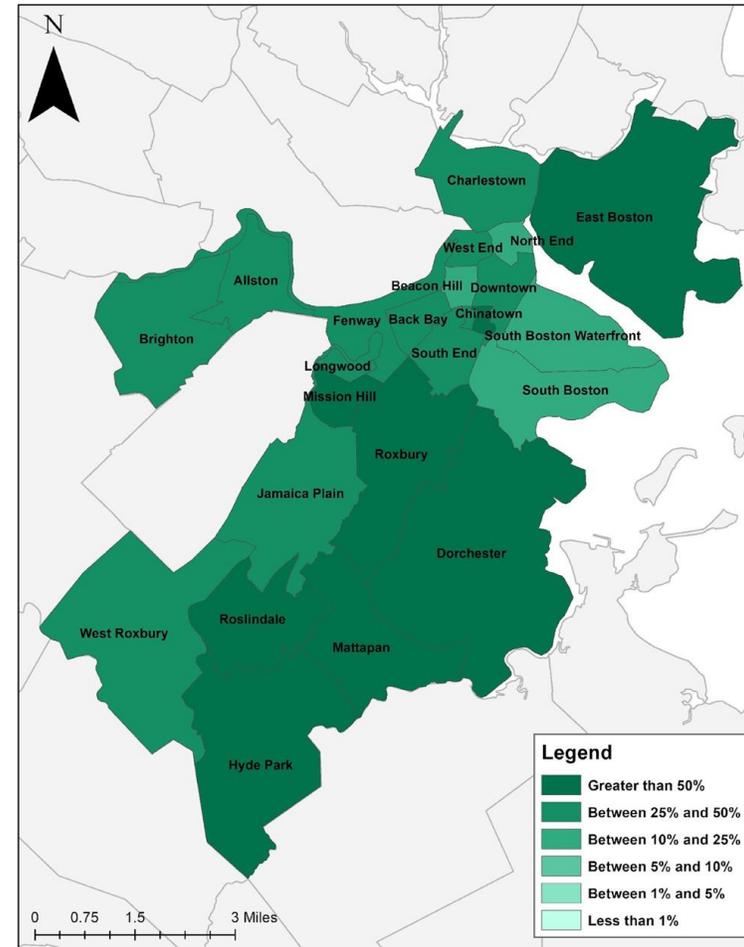
Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

- While Boston's non-White population was smaller in 1950, it was also more concentrated. In 1950, 87% of Boston's small non-White population lived in Roxbury or the South End.
- By 2020, the non-White population had grown significantly and spread into other neighborhoods, notably Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, and Mattapan.

Percent Share of Non-White or Hispanic Population, 1950

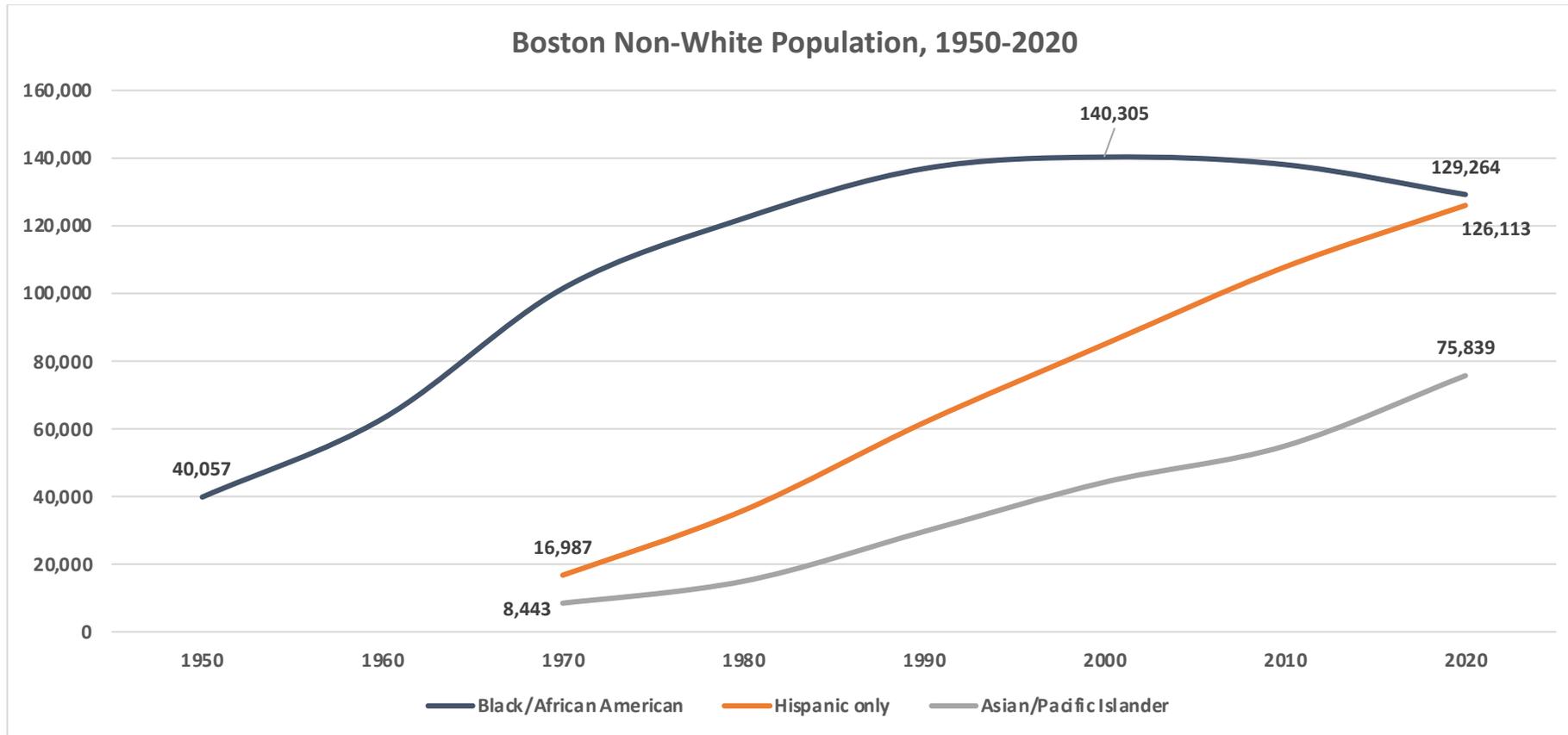


Percent Share of Non-White or Hispanic Population, 2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis
 Note: For 1950, "non-White" Census categories were Black/African American or "Other." After 1970, "non-White" Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

- The Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander populations in Boston have steadily increased since 1970 to 126,000 and 76,000 people, respectively.
- The Black/African American population alone peaked in 2000 at 140,000 people and has been slightly declining since.

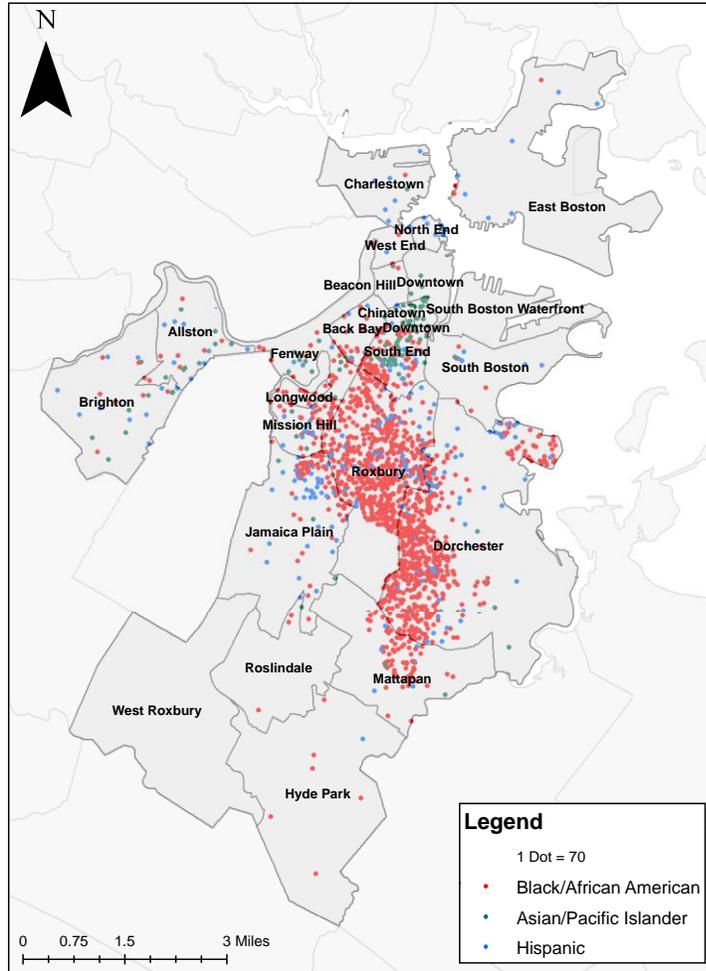


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

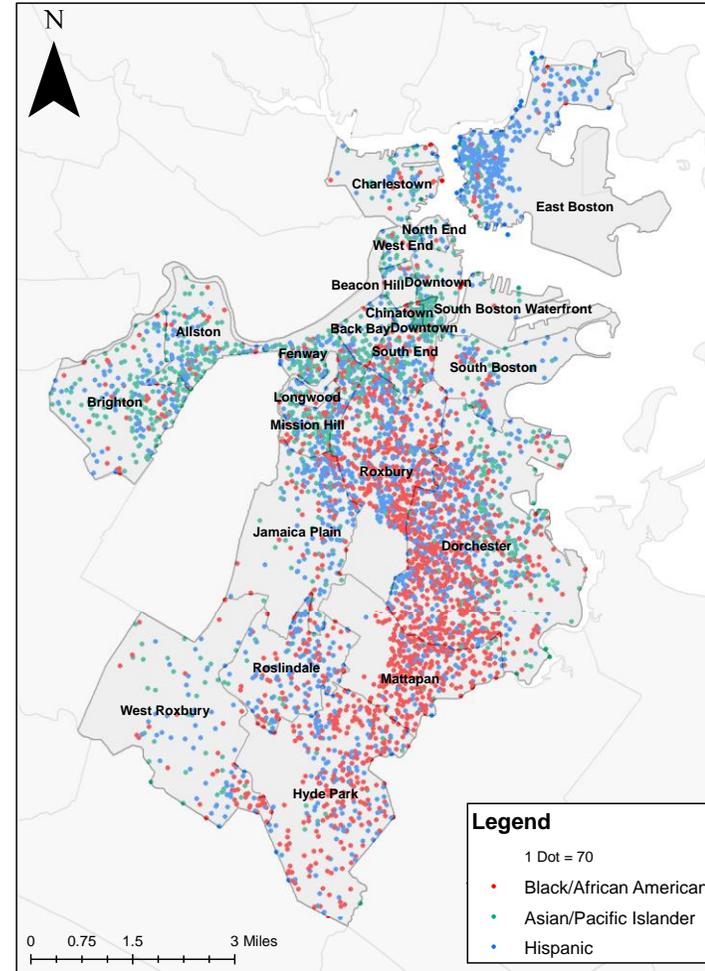
Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

- In 1970, the Black/African American population was concentrated in Roxbury and parts of Dorchester, while the Asian/Pacific Islander population was concentrated in the Chinatown and Downtown area.
- By 2020, these populations had spread out more throughout various neighborhoods in the city. Roxbury and Dorchester have much higher populations of Hispanic people than in 1950.

Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic Populations, 1970



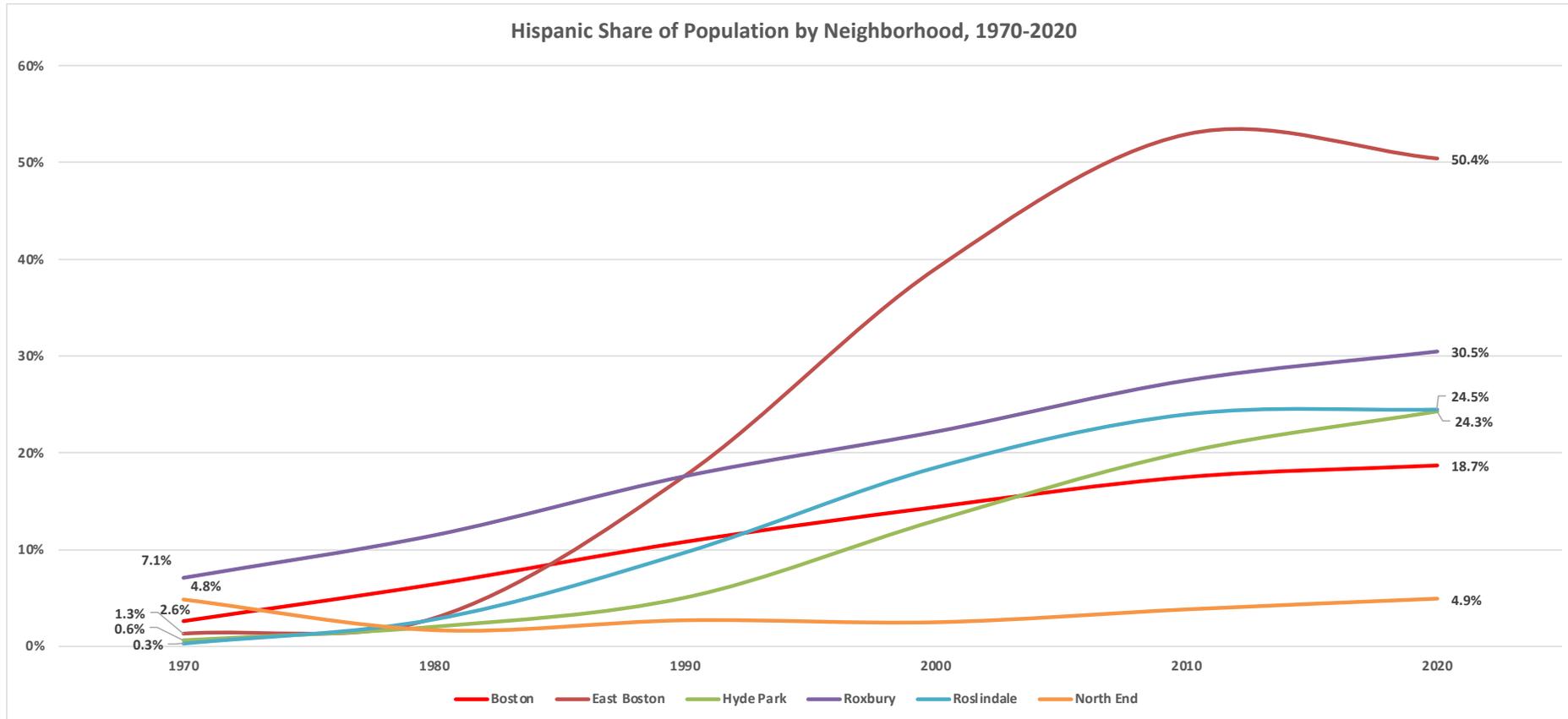
Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic Populations, 2020



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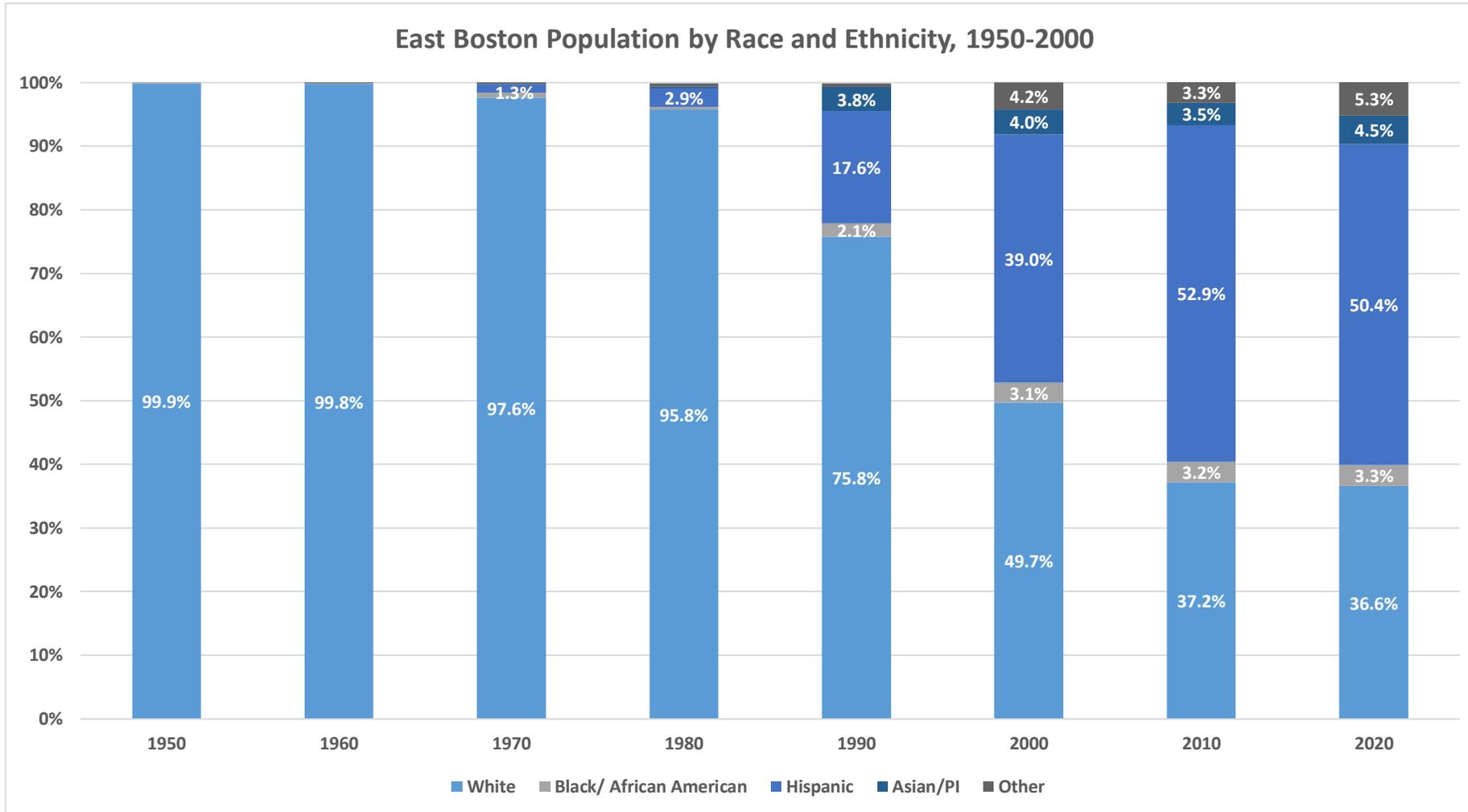
- Boston’s Hispanic population share has seen a dramatic increase since 1970, to almost 20%.
- East Boston, Roxbury, Roslindale, and Hyde Park have the largest shares of Hispanic populations.
- Roslindale had the largest increase in share of Hispanic population, from 0.3% to 24.5%.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

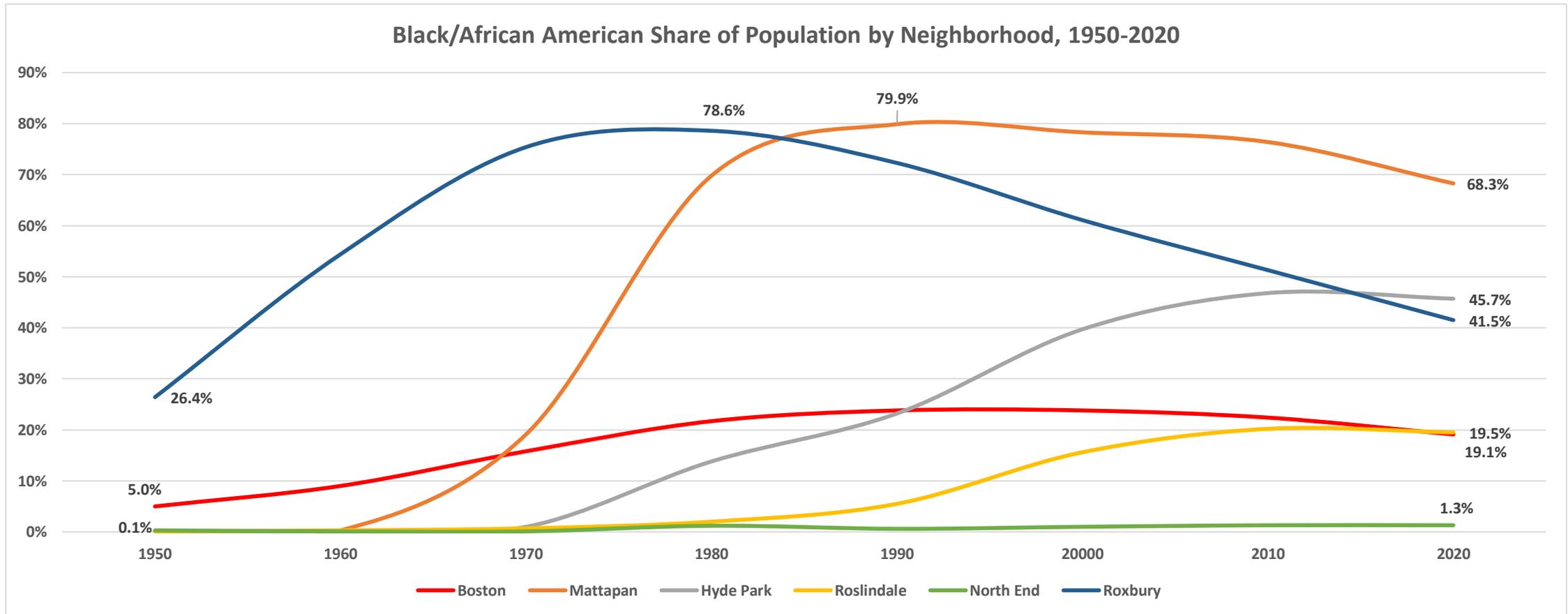
- East Boston’s non-Hispanic White population has been steadily declining since 1950.
- East Boston’s population growth since 1980 is predominantly due to the growing Hispanic population.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

- The Black/African-American share of Boston’s population increased from 5% in 1950 to about 24% in 2000 but has since been on a decline.
- Mattapan, Hyde Park, Roxbury, and Roslindale have the largest shares of Black/African American populations.
- The Black/African-American share of Roxbury’s population rose from 25% in 1950 to a peak of 79% in 1980 before falling back 42% in 2020.

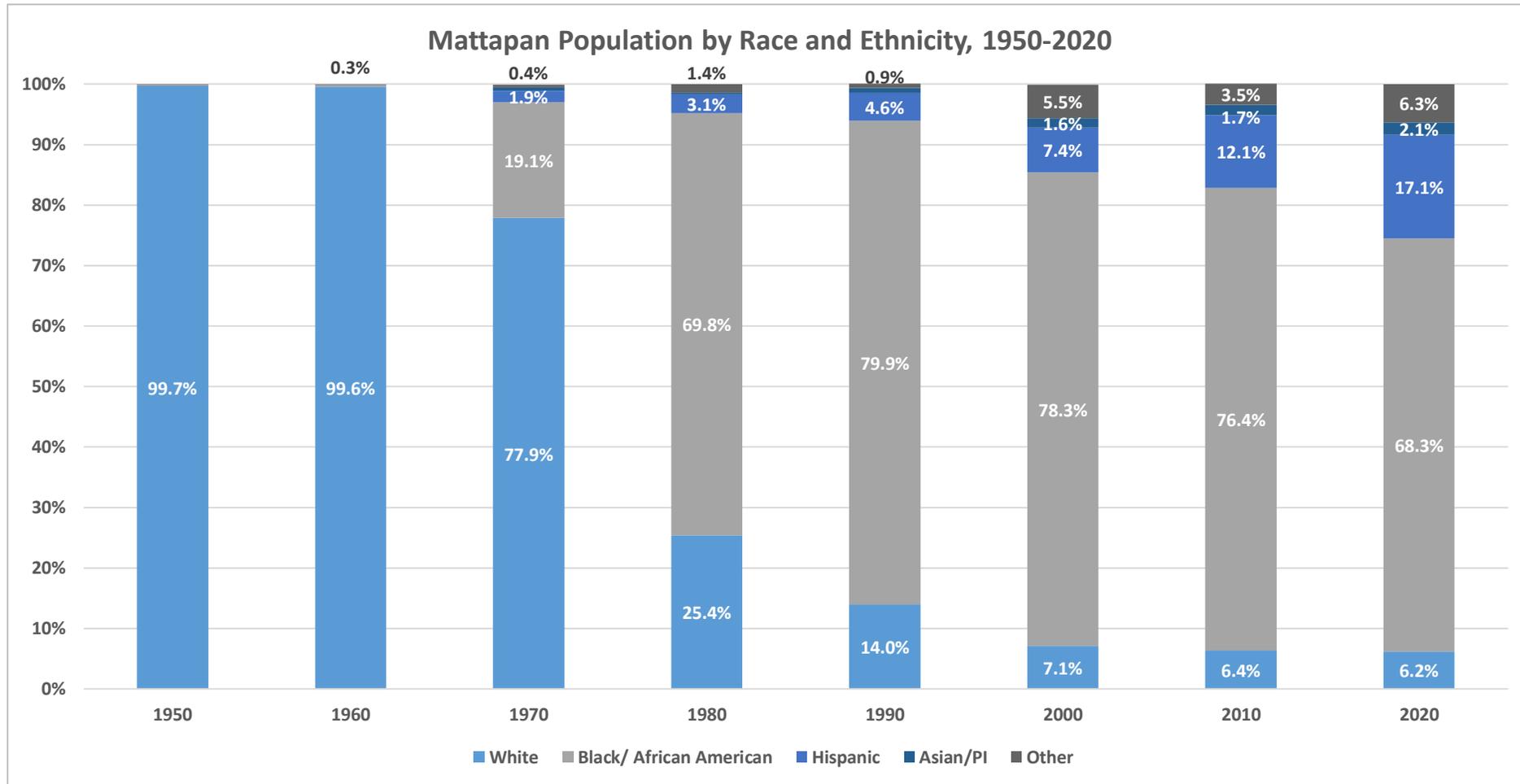


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

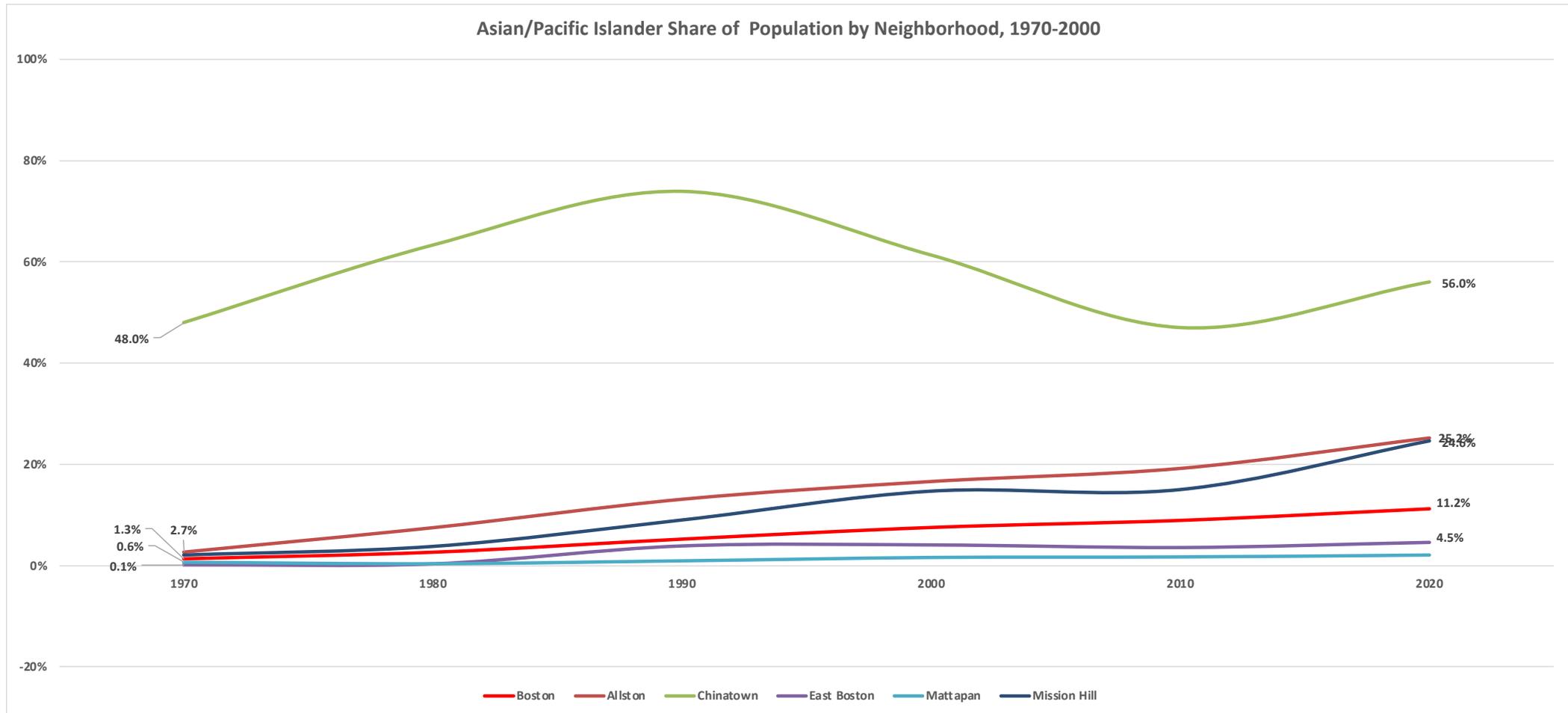
Note: This graph shows people who identify as Black/African American alone, and does not include multi-racial or Hispanic people.

- Mattapan’s population distribution has changed drastically since 1950.
- Starting in 1980, over half of Mattapan’s population has been Black/African American.
- Since 1970, the Hispanic population in Mattapan has also been growing.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis
 Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

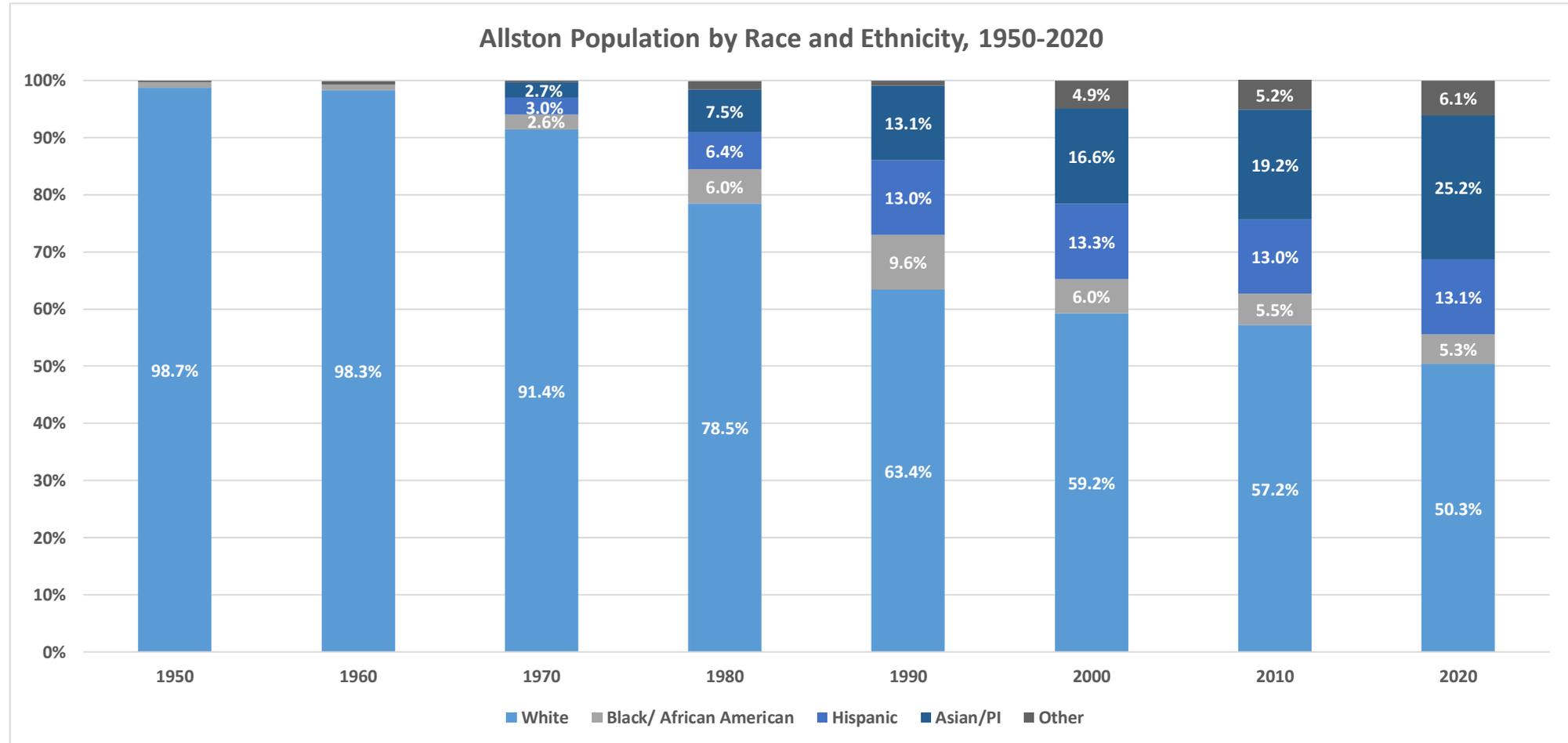
- In 2020, the share of the Asian/Pacific Islander population in Boston was 11%, compared to 1.3% in 1950.
- Chinatown has historically had a large Asian population share.
- The growth in the Asian population has been especially strong in Allston and Mission Hill, where it has risen to 25% of the neighborhood population.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

Note: For 1950 & 1960, "non-White" Census categories were Black/African American or "Other." After 1970, "non-White" Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

- The White population share in Allston has fallen from 99% in 1950 to 50% in 2020.
- The Asian/Pacific Islander population share has increased from 3% in 1970 to 25% in 2015.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2020 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis
 Note: For 1950 & 1960, “non-White” Census categories were Black/African American or “Other.” After 1970, “non-White” Census categories also include Asian and Hispanic.

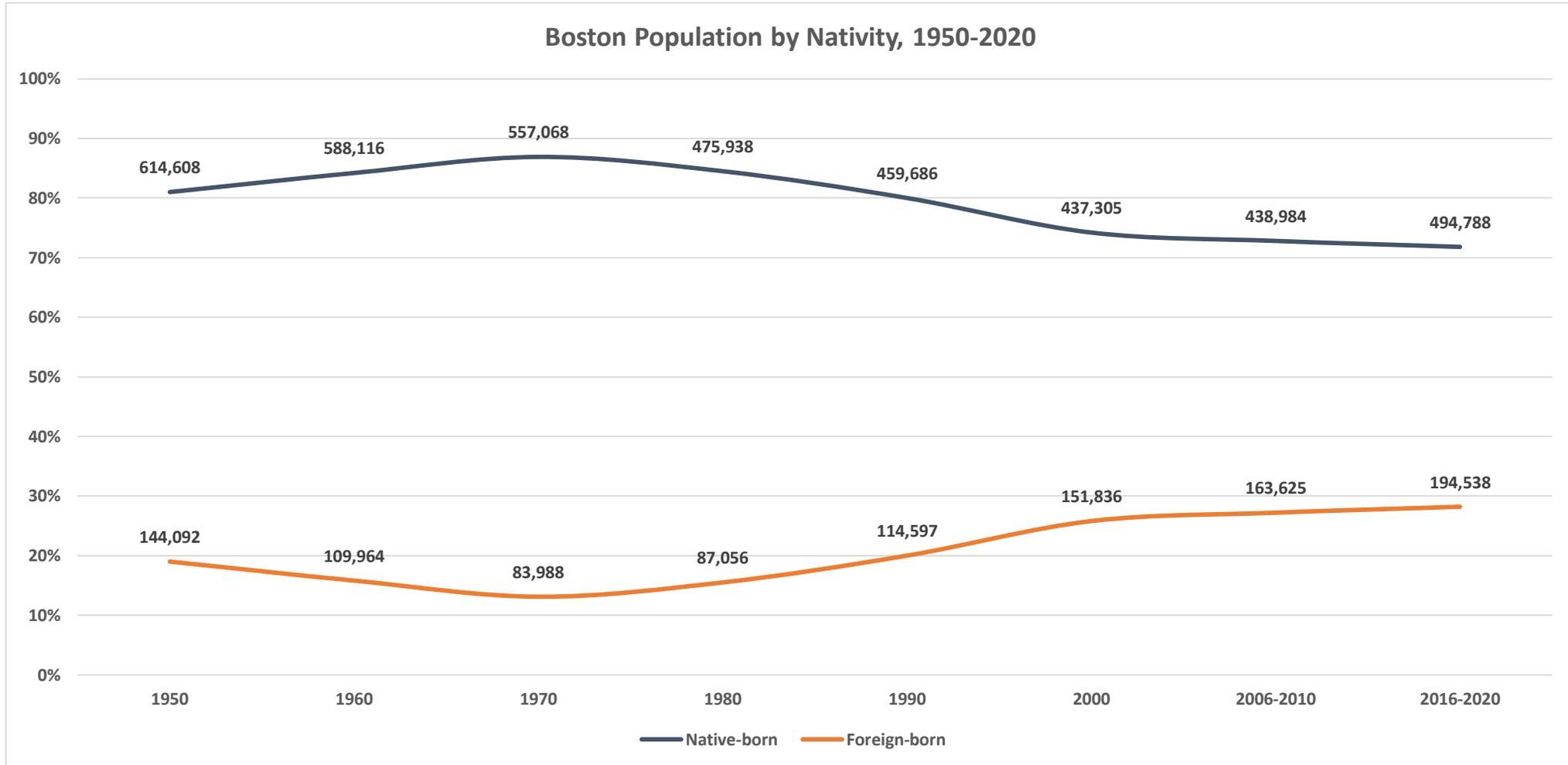
5.

IMMIGRATION TRENDS



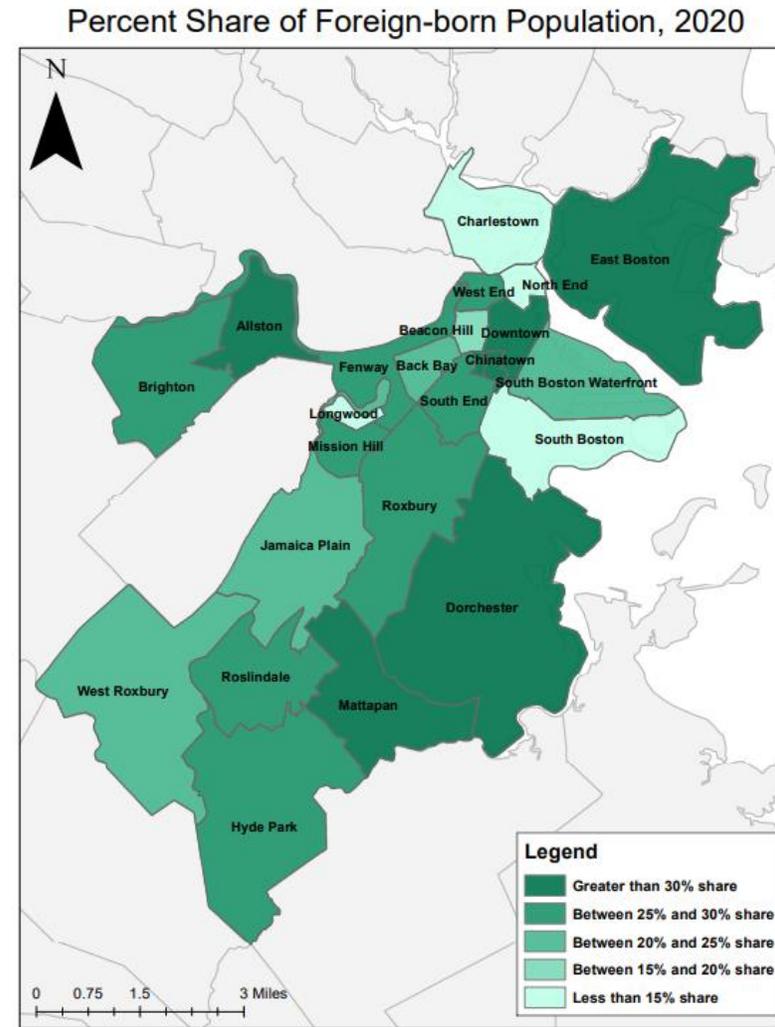
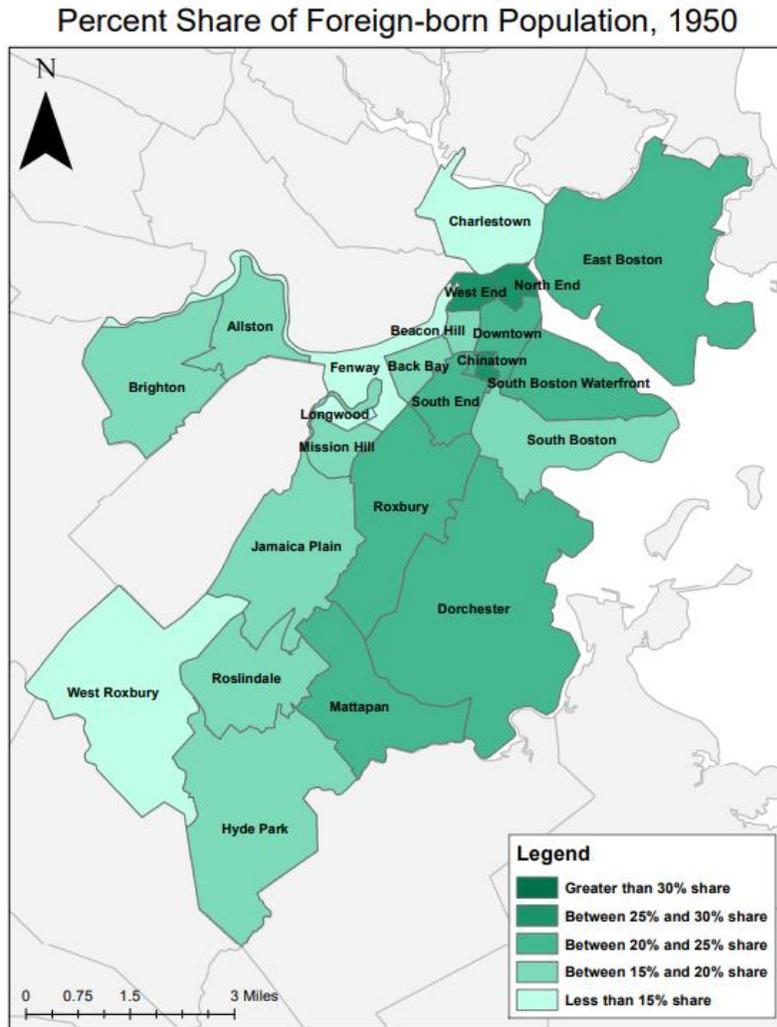
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- The share of Boston’s native-born population increased between 1950 and 1970 but has been declining since. The absolute number of native-born people was in continual decline from 1950 through 2000.
- The foreign-born population fell from 1950 to 1970 but has more than doubled since 1970.



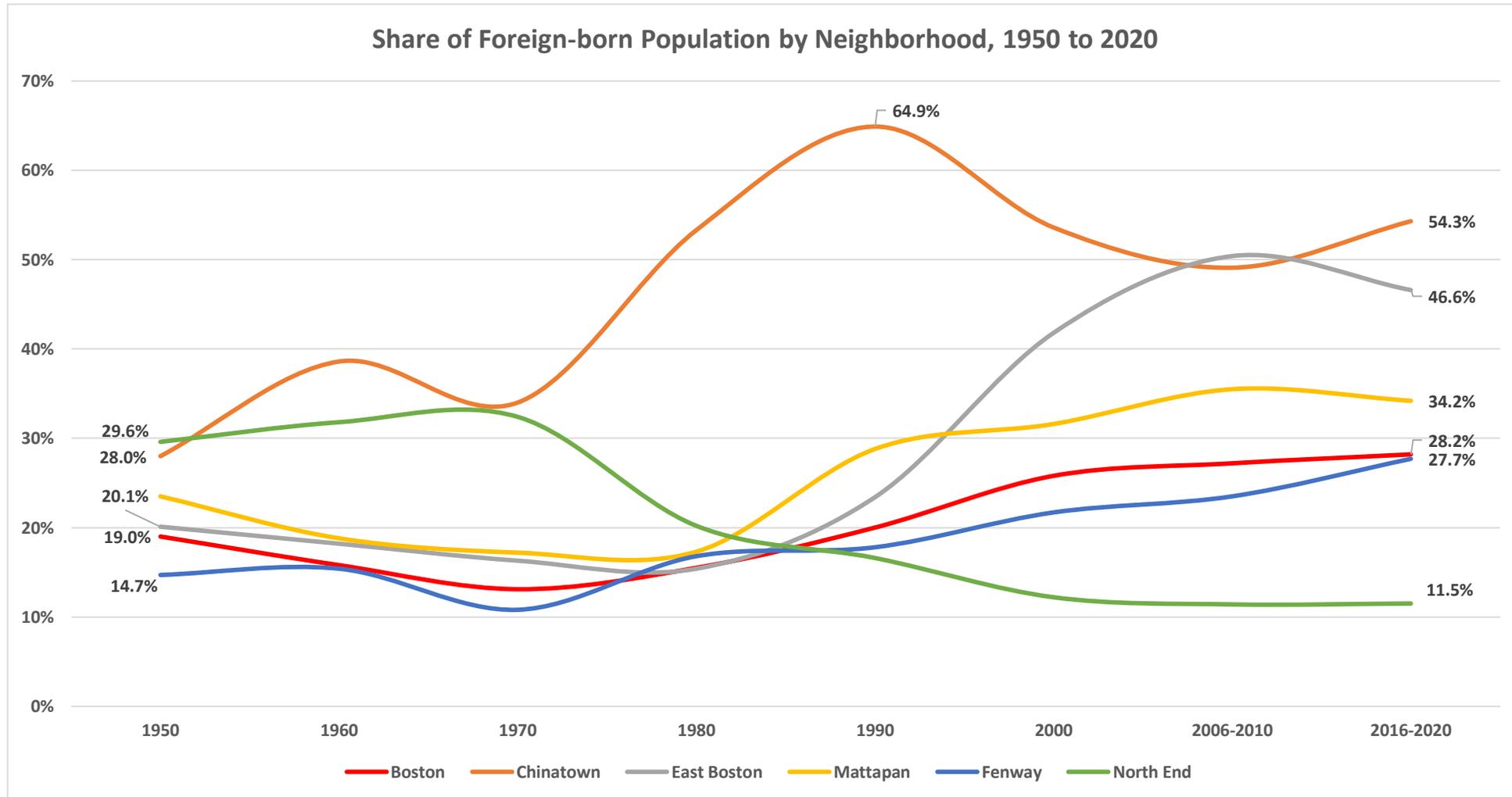
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The foreign-born population share increased in most of the city from 1950 to 2020, growing the most in East Boston, Chinatown, Fenway, Allston, and Hyde Park.
- The foreign-born share declined in the North End, South Boston, and Beacon Hill.



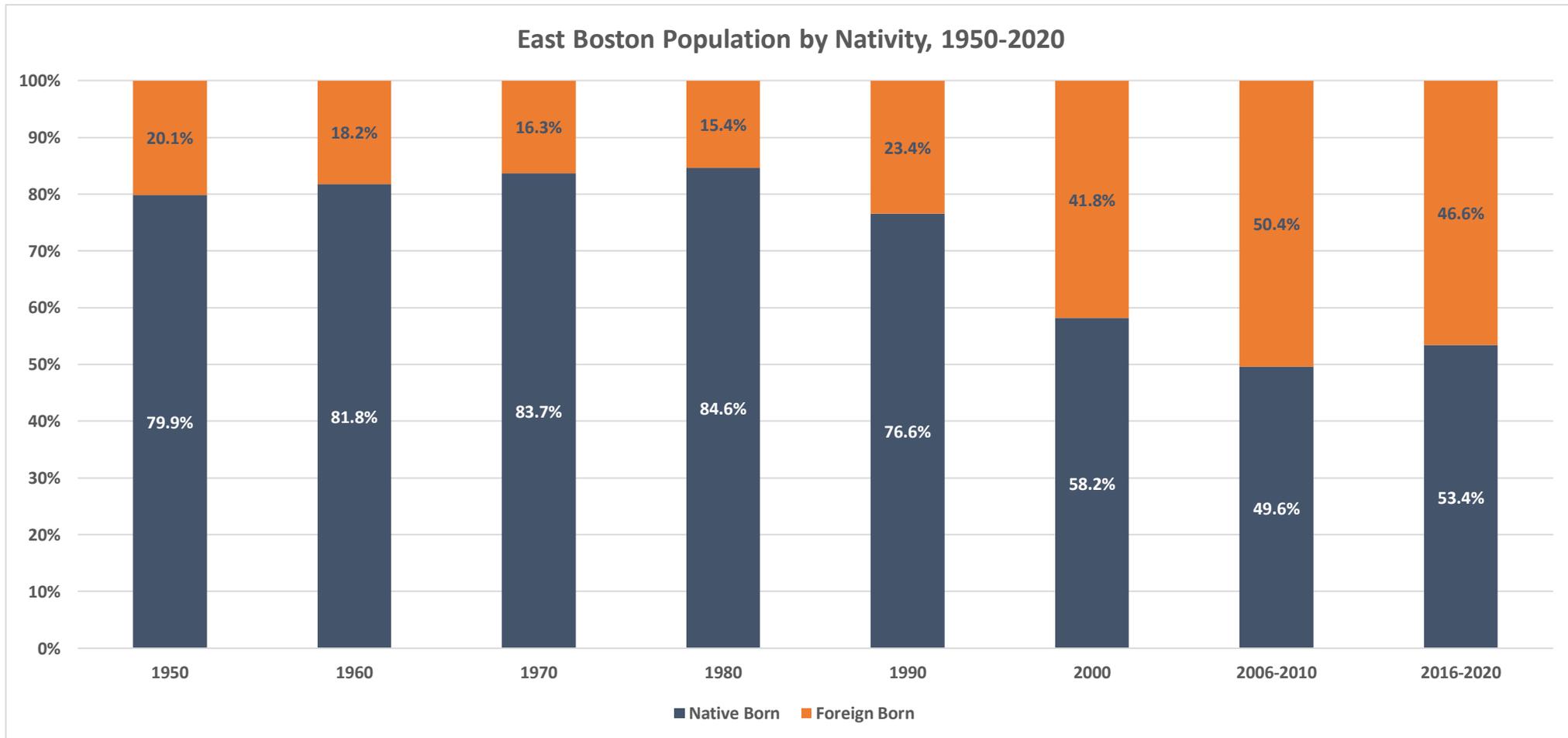
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 & 1980 Decennial Censuses, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Chinatown has maintained a large foreign-born share throughout the period - between 28% and 54%.
- East Boston, Mattapan, and Fenway have increased their foreign-born share since 1950.



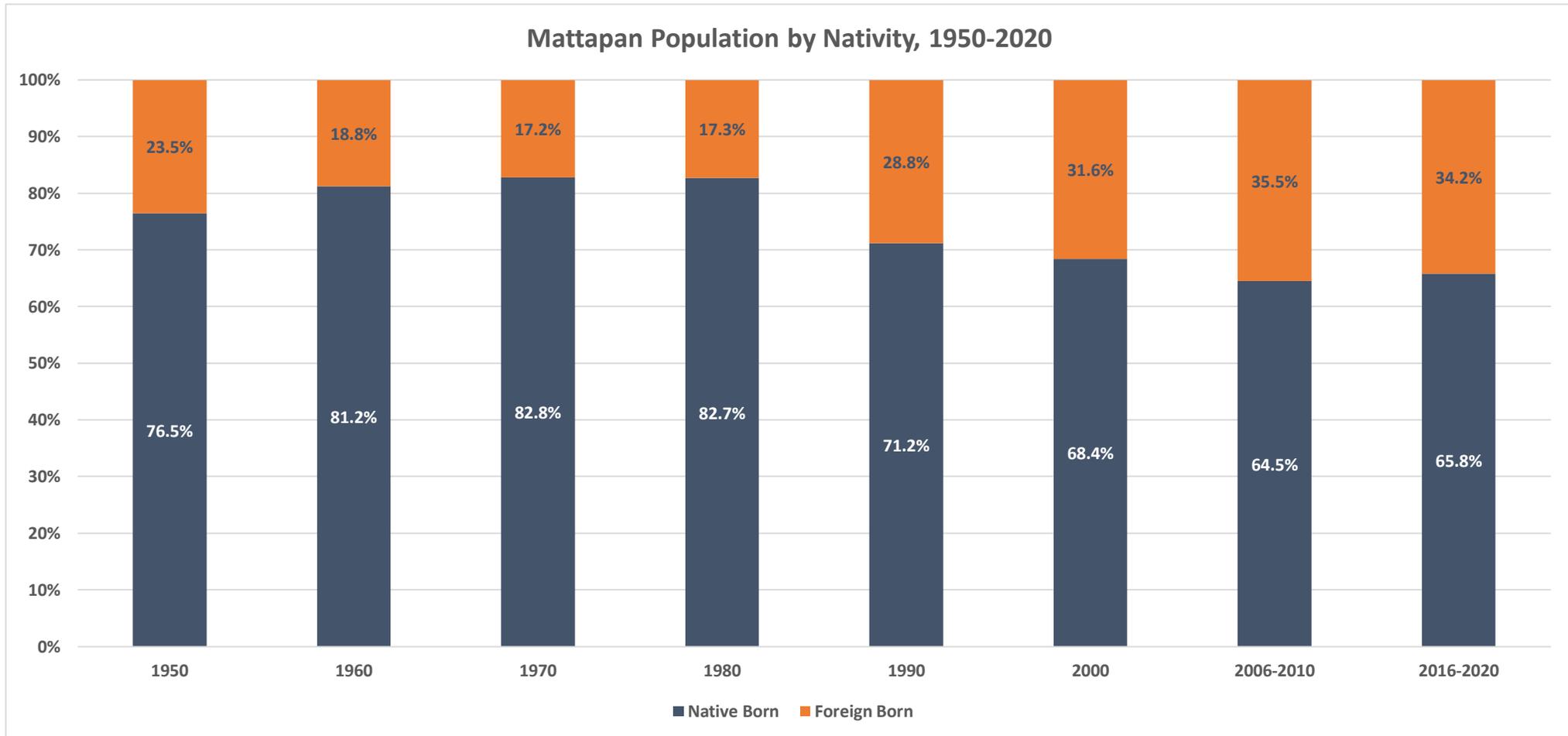
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- East Boston's foreign-born share remained relatively constant between 1950 and 1990 but began to see an increase in 2000.
- In 2020, almost half of East Boston residents were foreign-born.
- As shown on the previous slides, Hispanic is the largest population share of East Boston.



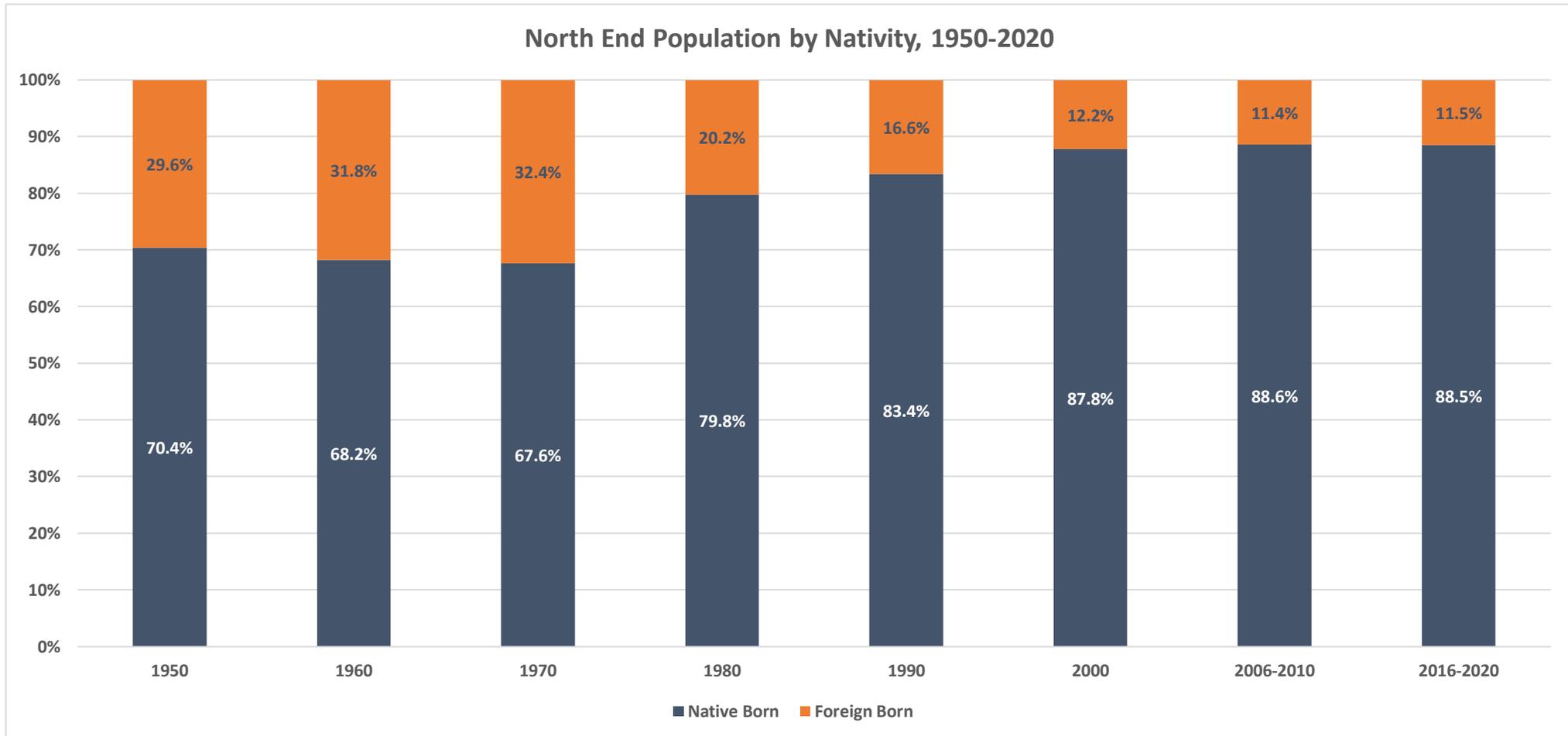
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The foreign-born share of Mattapan's population has increased – partly due to an increasing number of Haitian immigrants beginning in the 1980s.
- 34% of Mattapan residents were foreign-born in 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- In 1950, the North End had the highest share of foreign-born, at 30%.
- By 2020, this share had declined to 12%.
- The foreign-born share in the North End has been on a decline since 1970.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

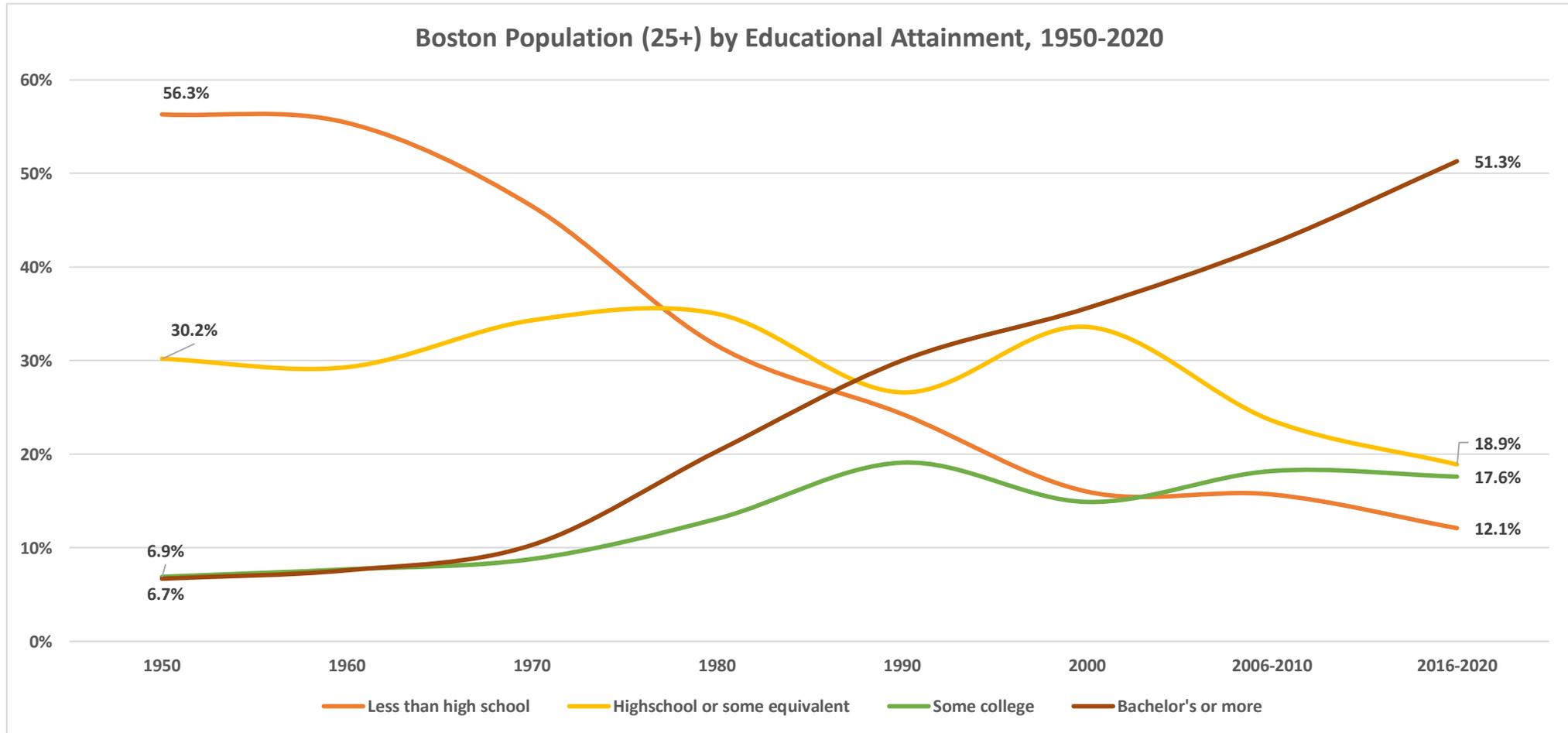
6.

TRENDS in EDUCATION



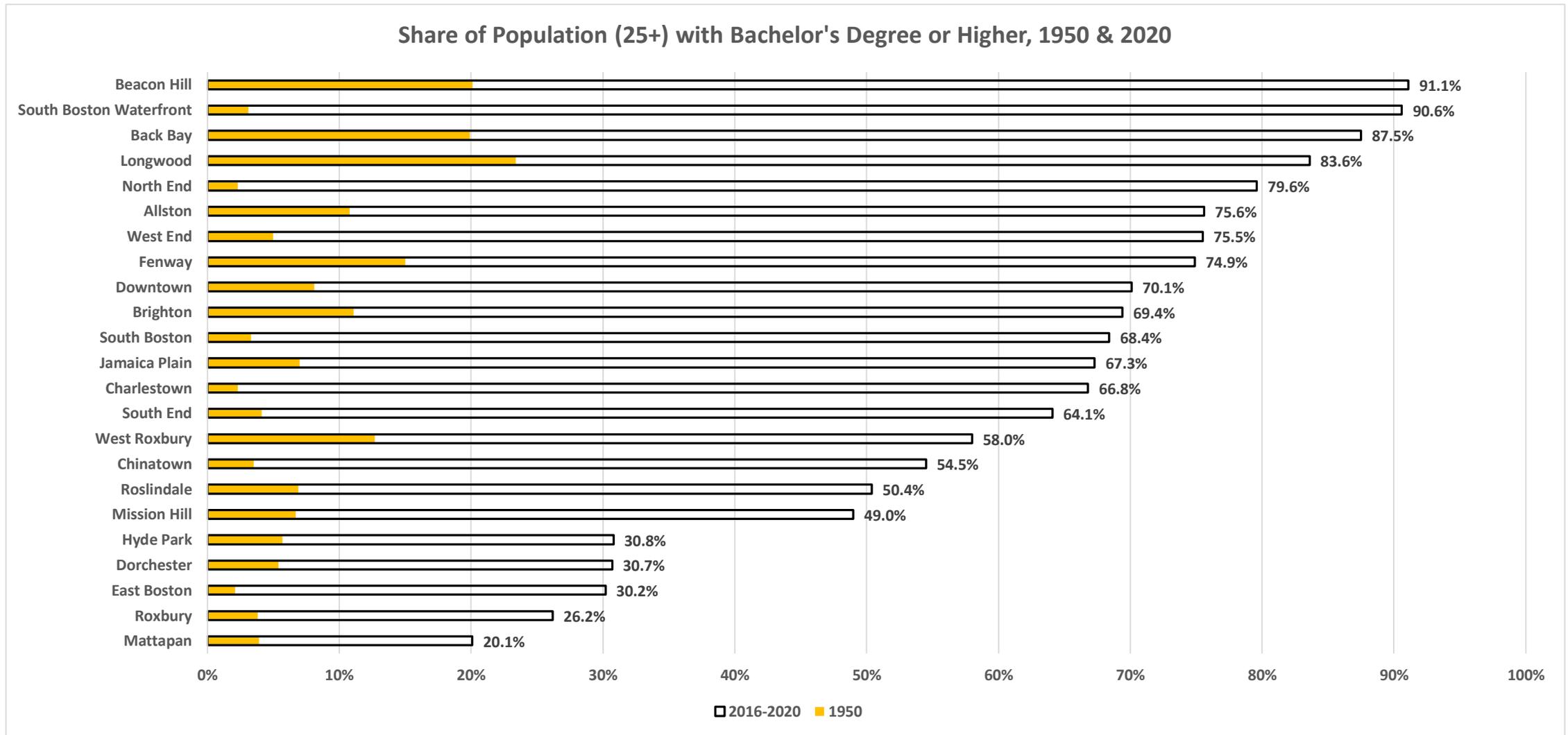
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- The share of the Boston population age 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher has grown while the share of the population with less than a high school diploma has declined.
- The share of the population with a Bachelor's degree or higher grew from 7% in 1950 to 51% in 2020.



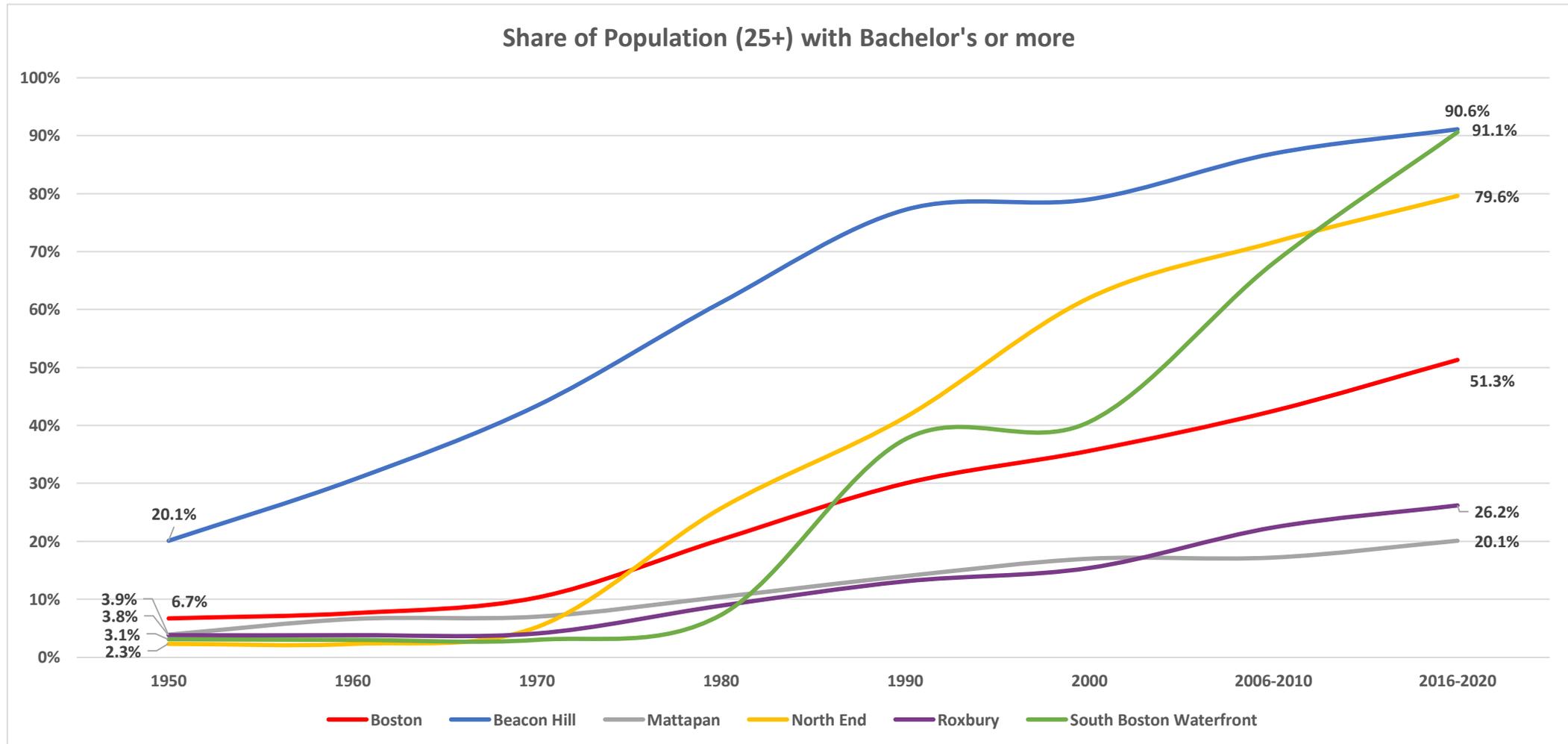
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Since 1950, all Boston neighborhoods have increased their share of the adult population with a bachelor's degree.
- However, shares range from 91% in Beacon Hill to 20% in Mattapan.



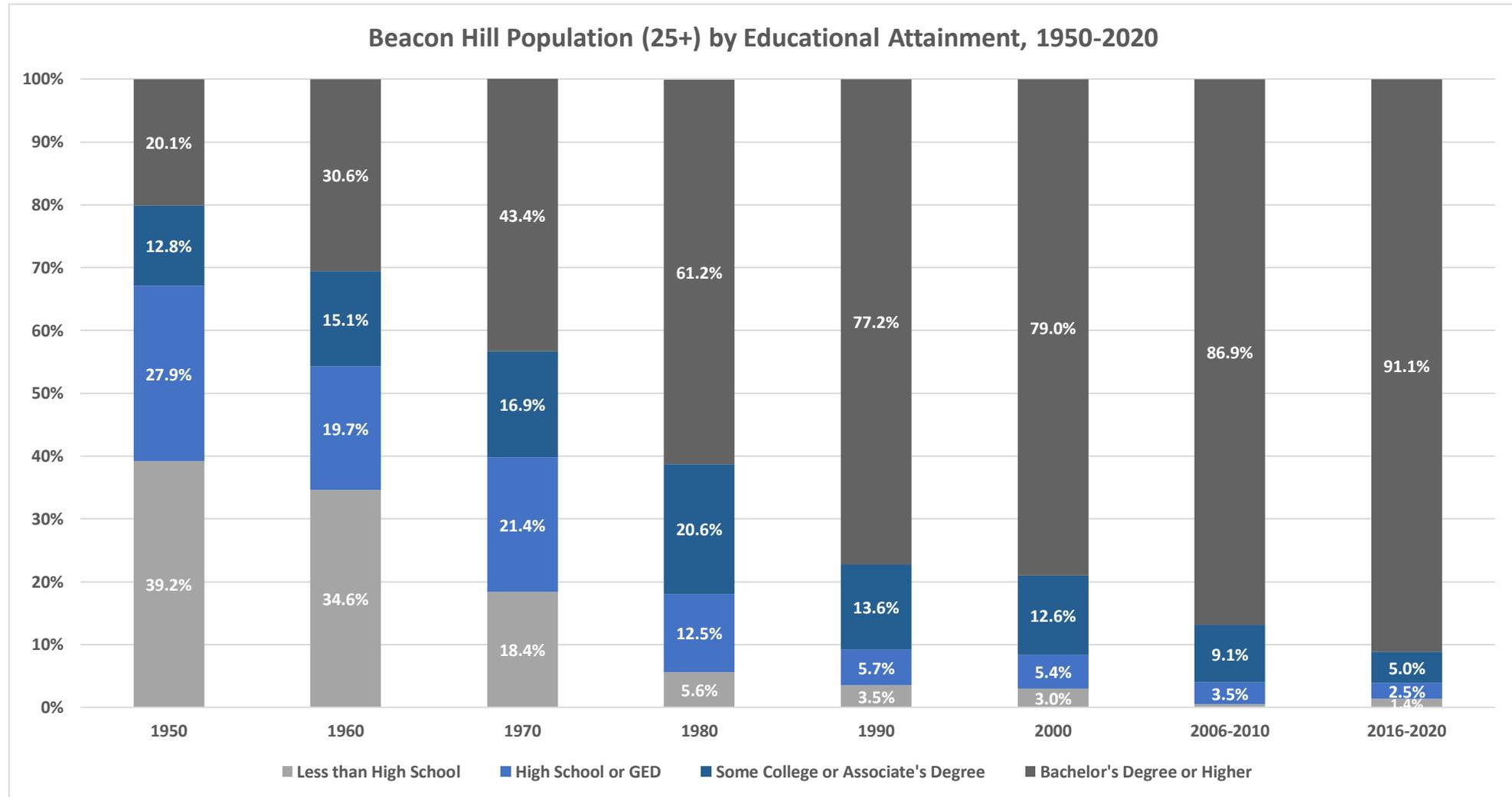
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 Decennial Census, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The share of the adult population with a Bachelor's degree or higher has risen steadily in Boston from 7% to 51%.
- Mattapan and Roxbury have low college-educated shares compared with the rest of the city.
- The South Boston Waterfront has had the largest increase in adults with a bachelor's education or more.



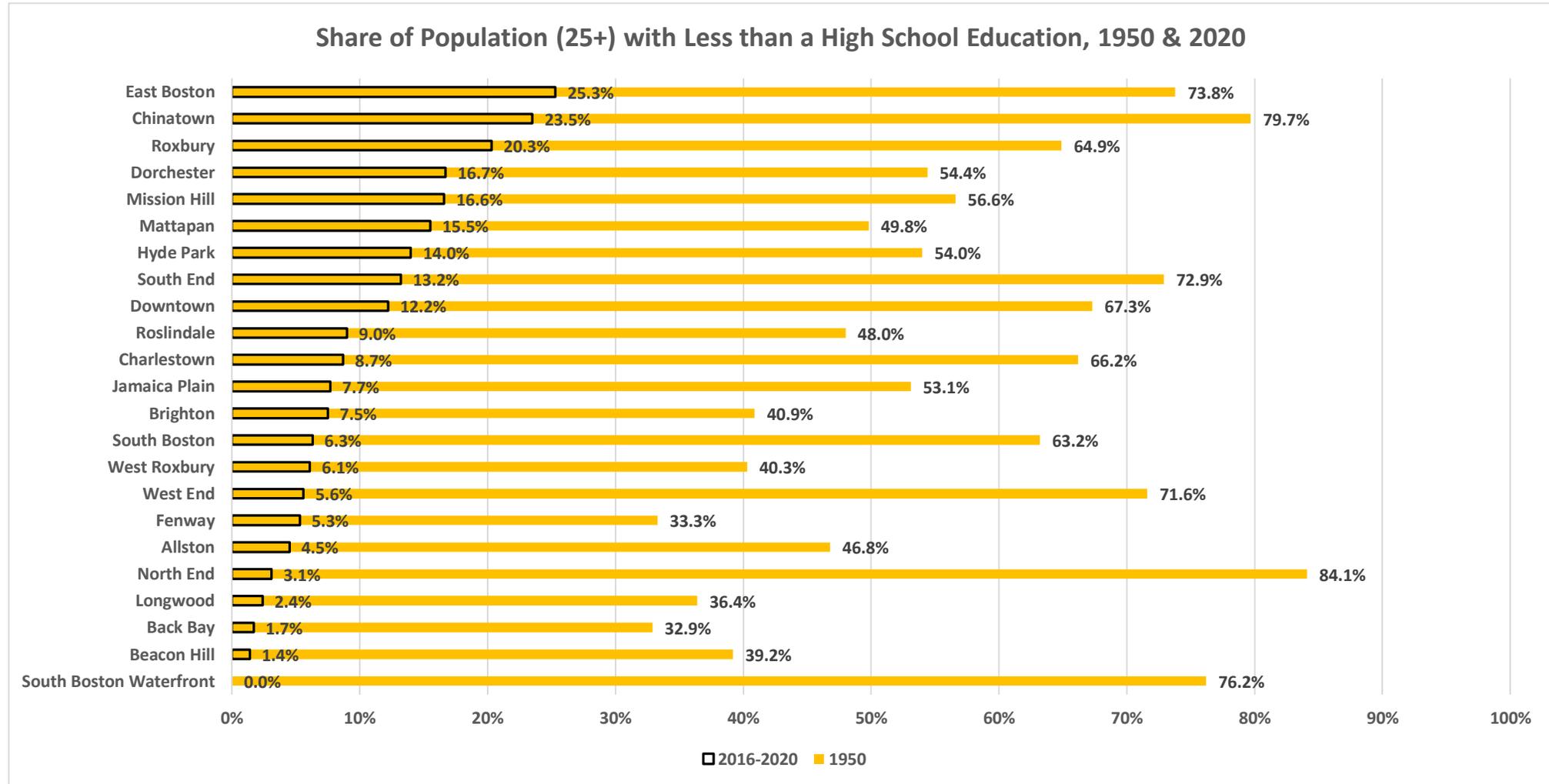
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- The college-educated share has always been relatively high in Beacon Hill and is now the highest in the city.
- Very few adult residents of Beacon Hill have no college education.



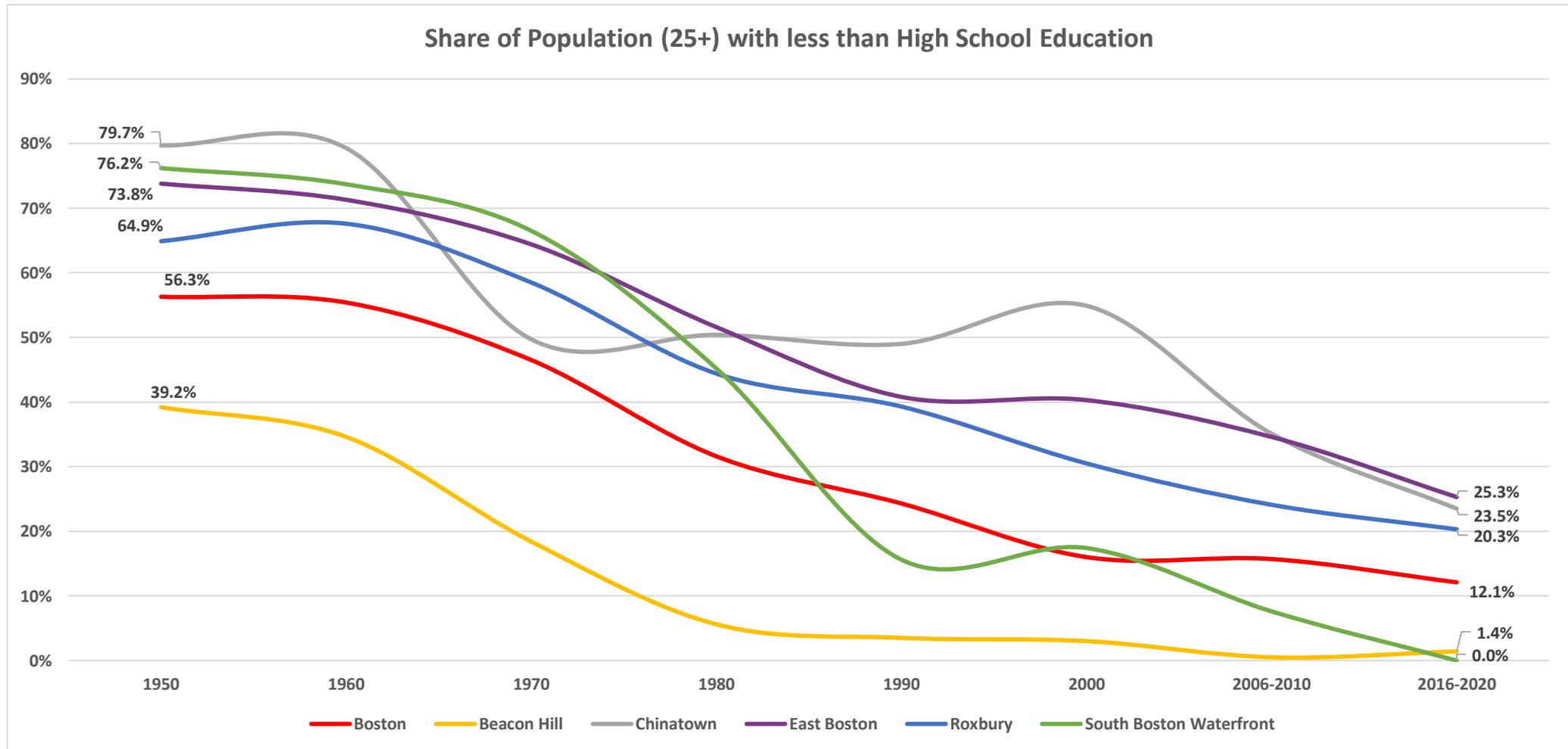
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Boston’s share of the adult population with less than high school education has fallen from 56% to 19% from 1950 to 2020.
- Every neighborhood saw increases in the share of its population with a high school degree.



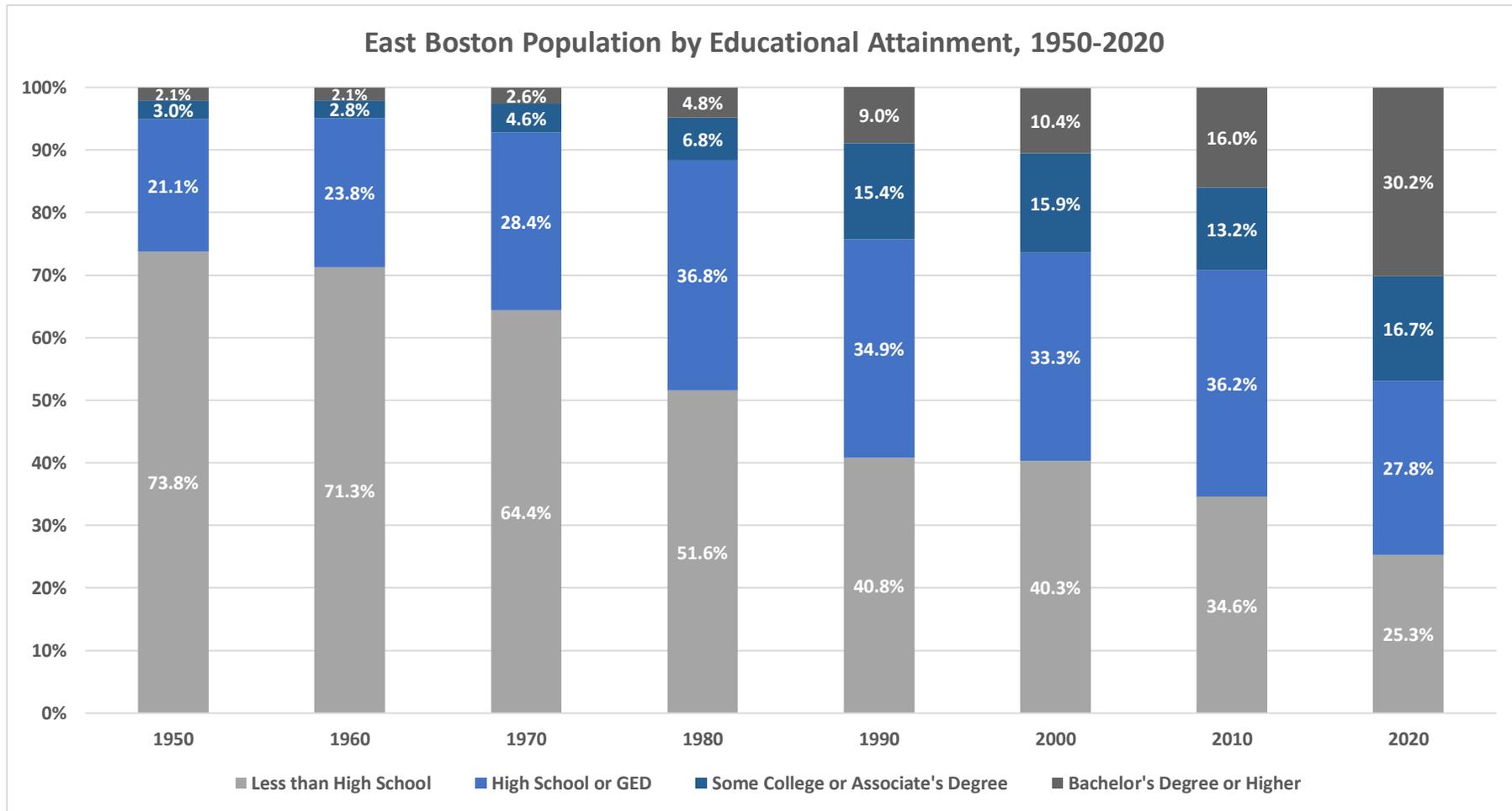
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 Decennial Census, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- East Boston, Chinatown, and Roxbury have higher shares of adults with less than a high school education compared to Boston as a whole.
- The share of adults with less than a high school education in Beacon Hill has steadily decreased from 39% to 1% between 1950 and 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

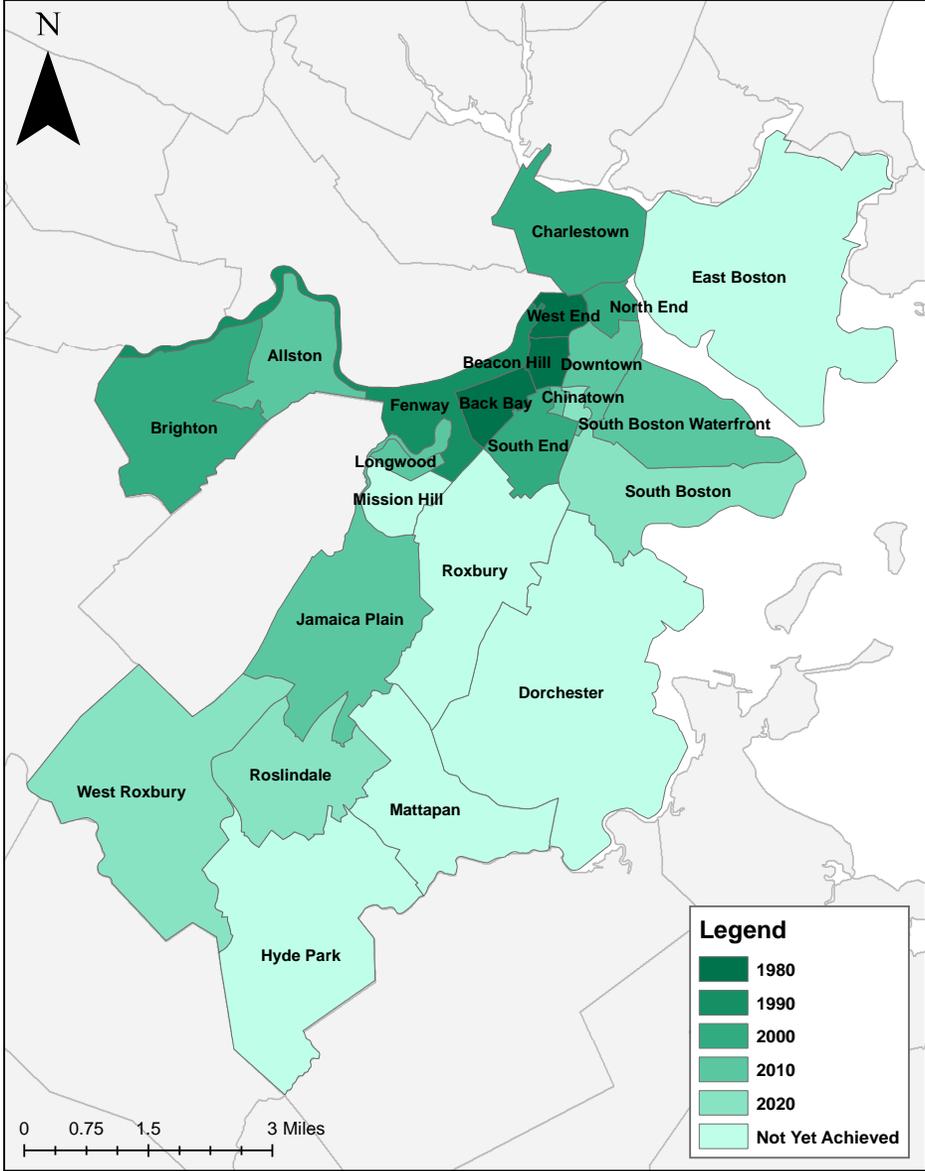
- East Boston has the highest share of the adult population without a high school education, about one-fourth of those age 25 and over.
- However, the share of the adult population with at least some college education has increased significantly, from 5% in 1950 to 47% in 2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

Year When Neighborhood First Reached 50% of Population (25+) with BA+

- A little over 50% of Boston residents age 25+ held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2020.
- Some neighborhoods met the 50% threshold faster than others. As early as 1980, at least half the residents in Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and the West End had a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Other neighborhoods slowly caught up, reaching 50% in different decades.
- Some neighborhoods are still below the citywide average and have not yet reached the 50% threshold. These include Hyde Park, Mattapan, Dorchester, Roxbury, East Boston, and Mission Hill.



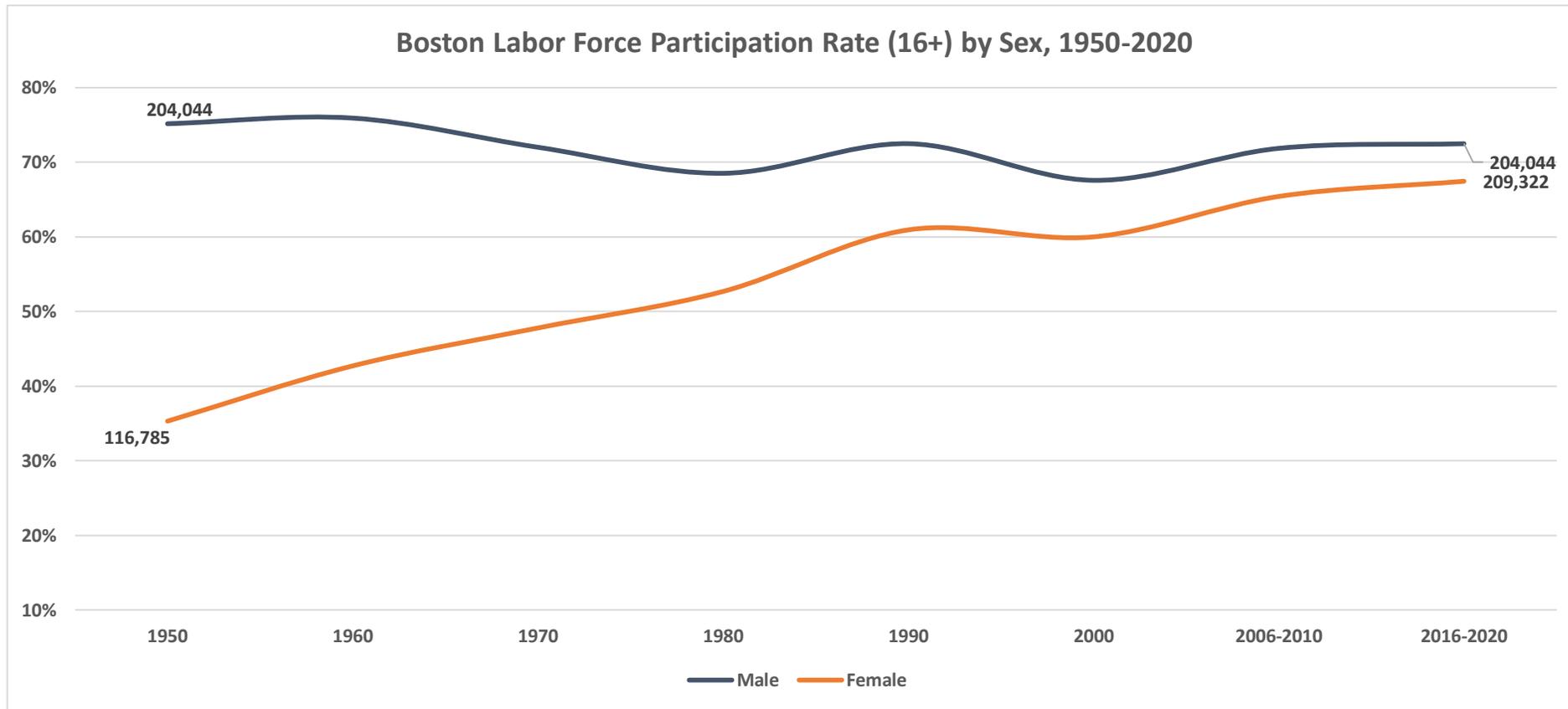
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

7.

LABOR FORCE TRENDS

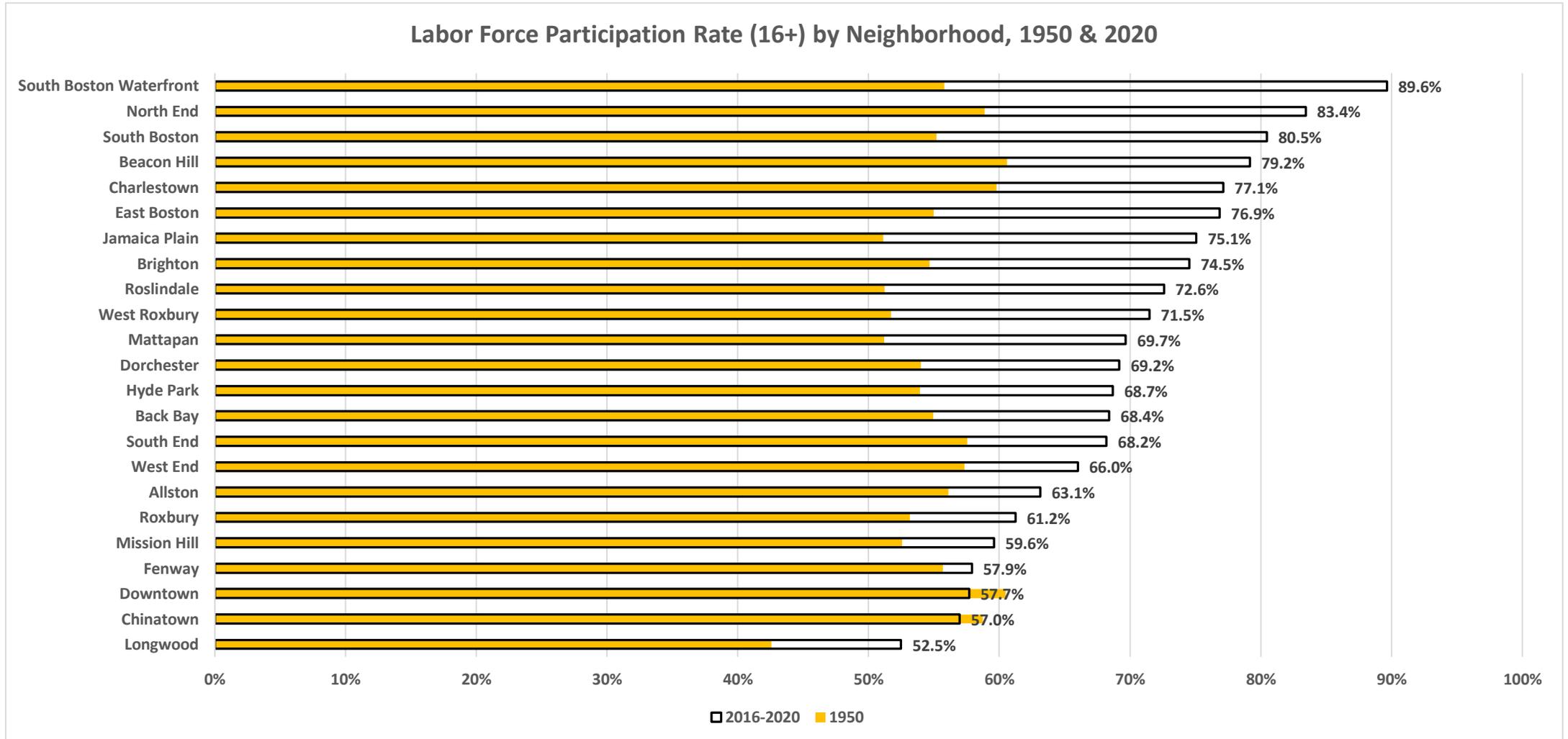


- Women’s participation in the Boston labor force has increased from 35% to 67% between 1950 and 2020.
- In 2020, women and men were separated by only 5 percentage points in labor force participation rates. In 1950, women trailed men by 40 percentage points.
- Men’s labor force participation has declined slightly between 1950 and 2020, from 75% to 72%.

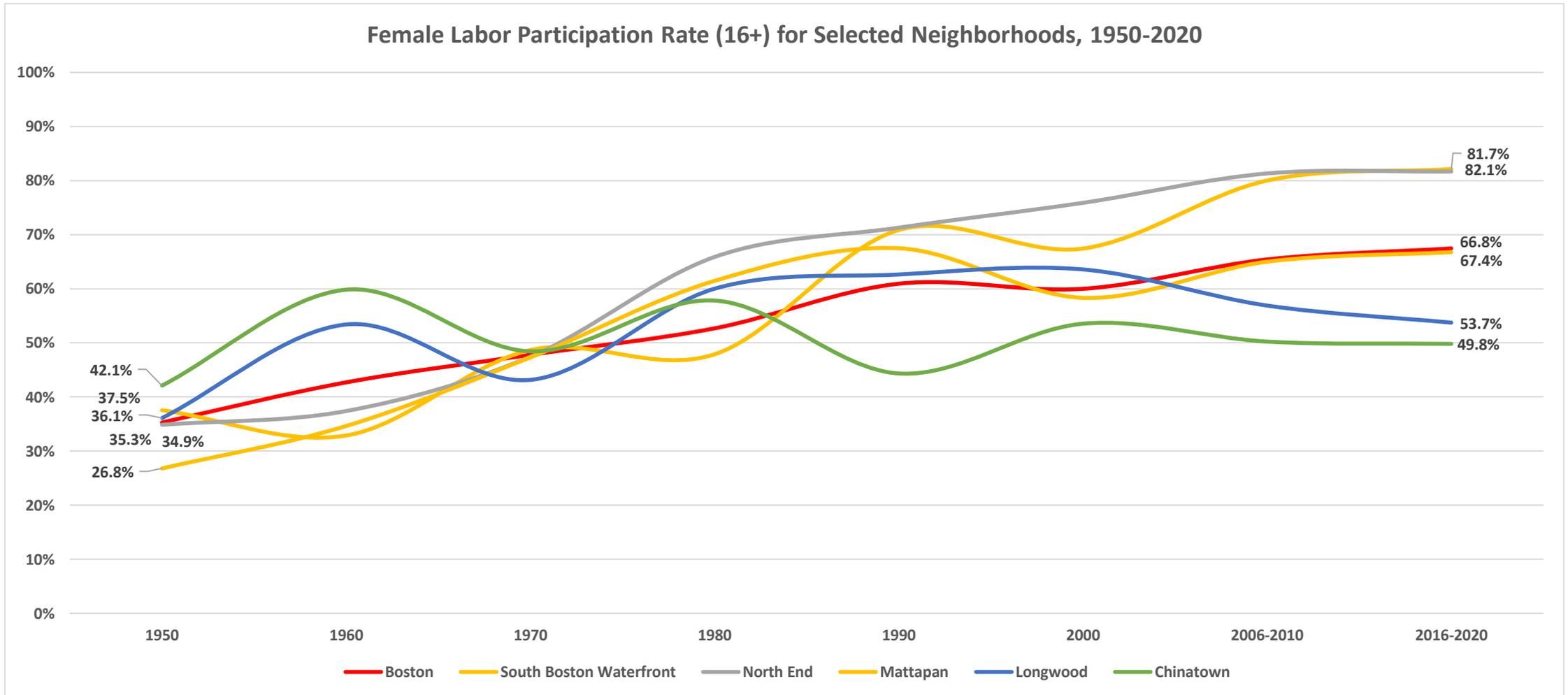


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2000 Decennial Censuses, 2006-2010 & 2016-2020 American Community Survey, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; BPDA Research Division Analysis

- Every neighborhood saw increasing labor force participation rates from 1950 to 2020, primarily due to increasing participation by women.
- In 2020, the South Boston Waterfront had the highest labor force participation rate, at almost 90%.
- The student-heavy neighborhood of Longwood had the lowest labor force participation rate.

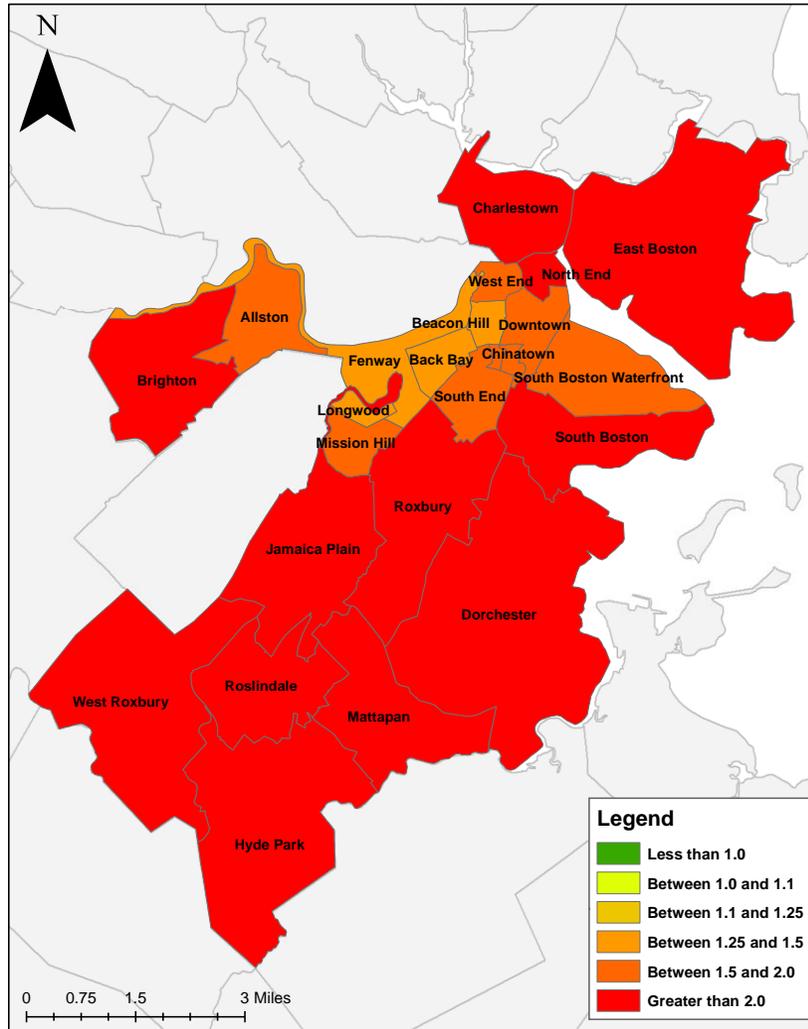


- The labor force participation rate for females ages 16+ has risen from 35% in 1950 to 67% in 2020.
- Female labor force participation rose particularly strongly in the North End, from 35% in 1950 to 82% in 2020.
- Rates in Longwood and Chinatown is below the Boston share in 2020.

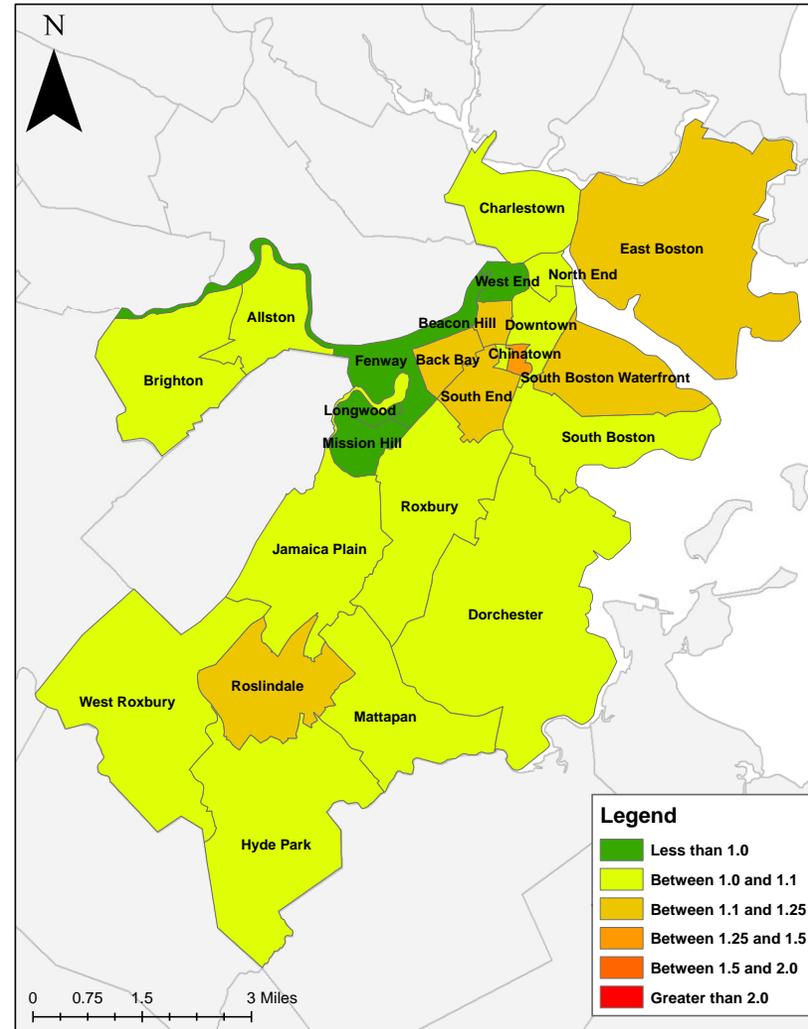


- In 1950 most neighborhoods had a male labor force participation rate that was more than 2 times greater than women's.
- In 2020, the labor force participation rate of women was only slightly less than men's. In several neighborhoods (the West End, Beacon Hill, Fenway, Longwood, and Mission Hill), women's labor force participation rates are higher than men's.

Ratio of Men's Labor Force Participation Rate to Women's, 1950



Ratio of Men's Labor Force Participation Rate to Women's, 2020



8.

SUMMARY



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Common Trends in Boston Neighborhoods since 1950

- Most neighborhoods . . .
 - Lost population from 1950 to 1980 and grew from 1980 to 2020
 - Added owner-occupied housing units
 - Increased foreign-born population
 - Improved educational attainment
 - Increased labor force participation

Diversification of Boston Neighborhoods since 1950

- Increased diversity within most neighborhoods in
 - Racial/Ethnic composition
 - Foreign-born population
- Increased specialization of some neighborhoods in
 - Age distribution
 - Labor force participation



Methodology

To create neighborhood-level data, we use U.S. Census Tracts to define neighborhood boundaries. The Census Bureau, however, has changed the boundaries of its Census Tracts across the decades. We use the most recent map of Census Tracts (from the 2020 Census), then where necessary, we interpolate data from earlier years' Census Tracts to conform to the tracts from 2020.

When Census Tracts change, we use that year's population by Census Block, the smallest geographic unit available in the Census, to create population weights that are used to apportion populations from earlier years to 2020 Census Tracts. In cases where Census Blocks overlap the boundaries of 2020 Census Tracts, the share of block land area on either side of the 2020 tract boundary is incorporated into the weights. In earlier years, when Census Block boundaries are not available, we use a modified method that employs 1990 Census Block geography, the oldest year available.

While there were a fair number of tract boundary changes over the full time period we study, the majority of these boundary changes occur within the larger neighborhood geographies, rather than between them. In these cases, the boundary changes do not affect the numbers shown in this report, as both portions of the divided tract are aggregated into the same neighborhood.

The methods used here are similar to those used in the commercially available Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB), produced by the Urban Institute and Geolytics, and the public use Longitudinal Tract Database (LTDB) produced by the American Communities Project. Because our geographic scope is limited to Boston, we are able to extend our crosswalk back over a longer time period than either of these sources, and to cover a larger set of variables than is available from the NCDB. Our method also uses block-level population weighting for all years, whereas the LTDB uses area-based weighting for earlier years. Creation of our crosswalk was greatly aided by the availability of historic tract and block-level GIS shapefiles from the National Historical Geographic Information System (NHGIS) at the Minnesota Population Center.