



Migration Patterns of Dominicans in the Caribbean

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Introduction

We attempt to shed light on the migration pattern of Dominicans within the Caribbean region. Before the 1960's, the migration flow of Dominicans was conservative due to the strict migratory controls imposed by the government of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The fall of his regime, and the periods of political and economic instability that followed, motivated thousands of Dominicans to migrate, primarily into the United States. This migratory movement has been extensively documented and studied. However, little is known about the migratory patterns that lead to the formation of Dominican communities in several island nations of the Caribbean. As such, we intend to explain the pattern and the motivation behind this migratory movement.

Literature Review

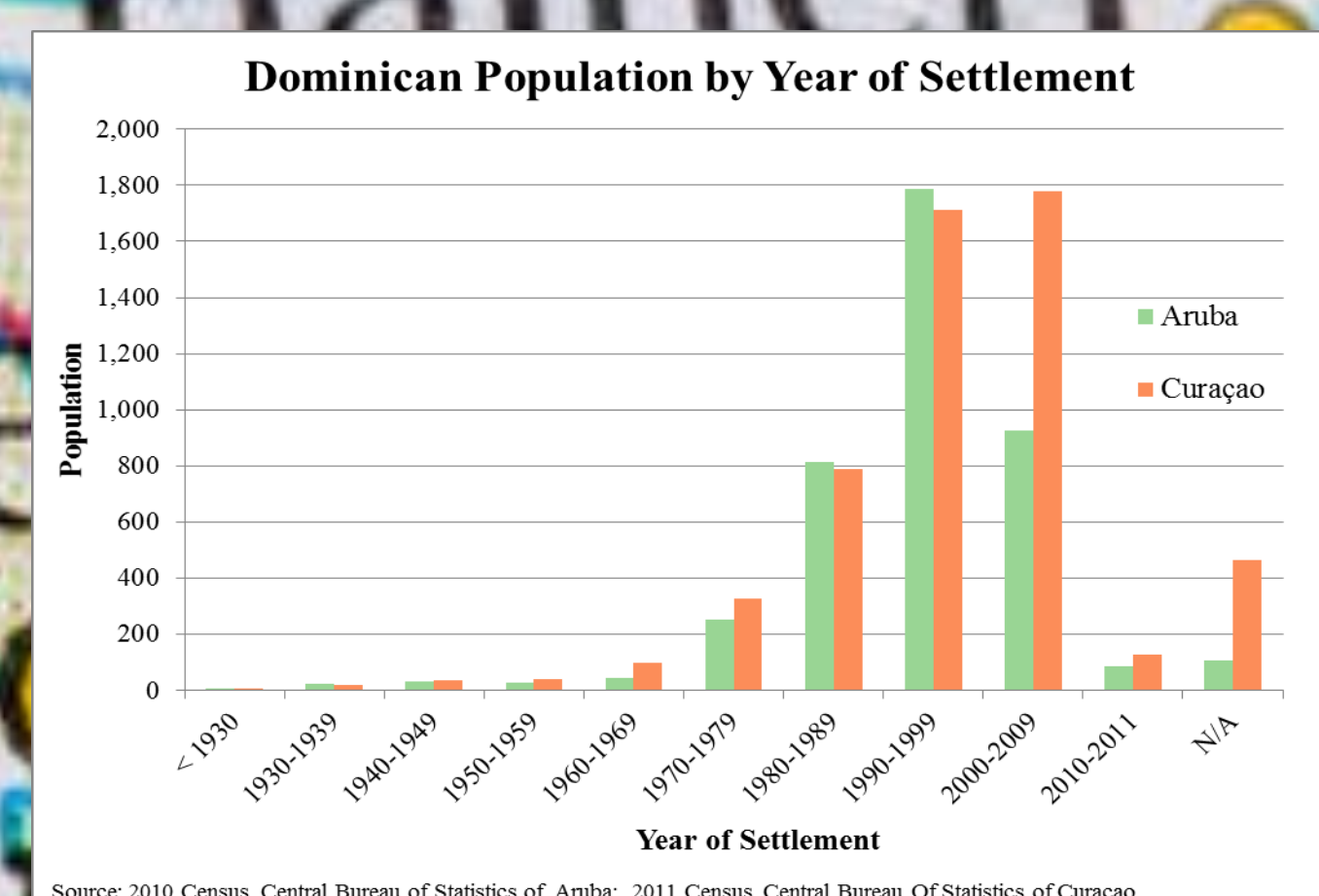
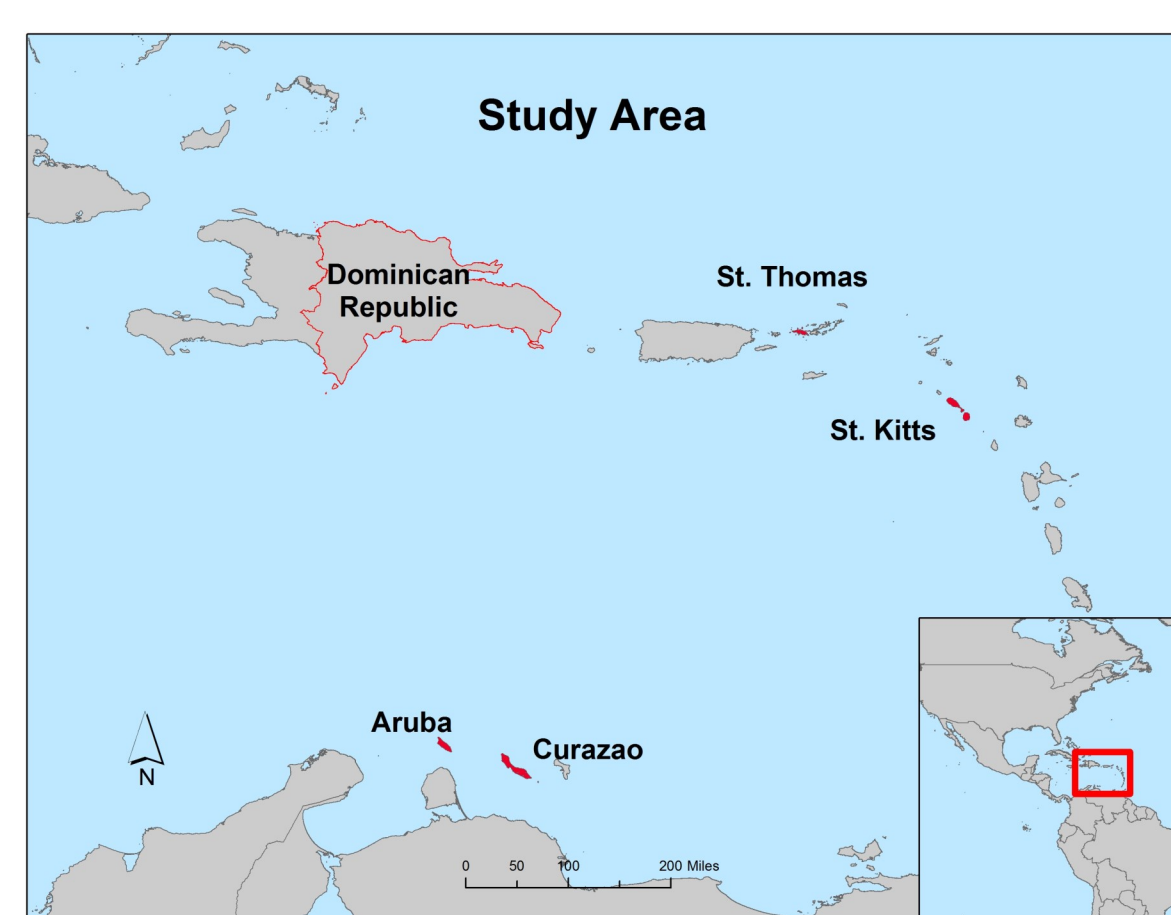
- There are several theories that attempt to explain international migration:
 - Neoclassical: individuals choose to migrate due to difference in wages and the perceived availability of jobs in the destination (Todaro, 1969).
 - New economic approach: migration is a collective decision by a close group (family) that seeks to minimize risks while maximizing the benefits. Difference in wages is not the only variable that influences the decision to migrate (Stark, 1991).
 - Structural approach: decision to migrate is not taken by the individual, rather external forces compel the individual to migrate (Lewis and Williams, 1986).
 - Transnationalism: migrant neither assimilates to the host country nor loses contact with the sending country. Instead, the migrant is active in the economic, political, and socio-cultural events in the sending country (Portes, 1999).
- Chain migration is a migratory pattern where an individual migrates to a destination based on information and/or aid provided by either a family member or a friend who has already settled in the host country. The aid can be economic (air fare) and/or social support (lodging, job placement, help assimilating, etc.) (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964; Rowntree, et al. 2012).
- This migratory pattern is characterized by two (2) aspects. First, migrants tend to share a common origin and destination. Second, the nuclear family tends to join the migrant once his condition in the host country improves (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964).
- In the Caribbean region, limited economic opportunities have been the main push factor motivating the migration of individuals to destination within the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. (Rowntree et al., 2012).
- Before 1960, the Dominican Republic was a receiving country (Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Duany, 2005). Between 1930 and 1960, the emigration of Dominicans was limited due to strict set by the regime of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The fall of his regime led to a period of political instability that motivated the emigration of thousands. Economic instability hastened this phenomenon during the 1970's and 1980's (Duany, 2005).
- Although the Dominican migratory patterns have concentrated in New York, New York and San Juan, Puerto Rico, recent migratory patterns have led to the formation of sizeable communities in Aruba, Curaçao and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Duany, 2005).

Research Questions

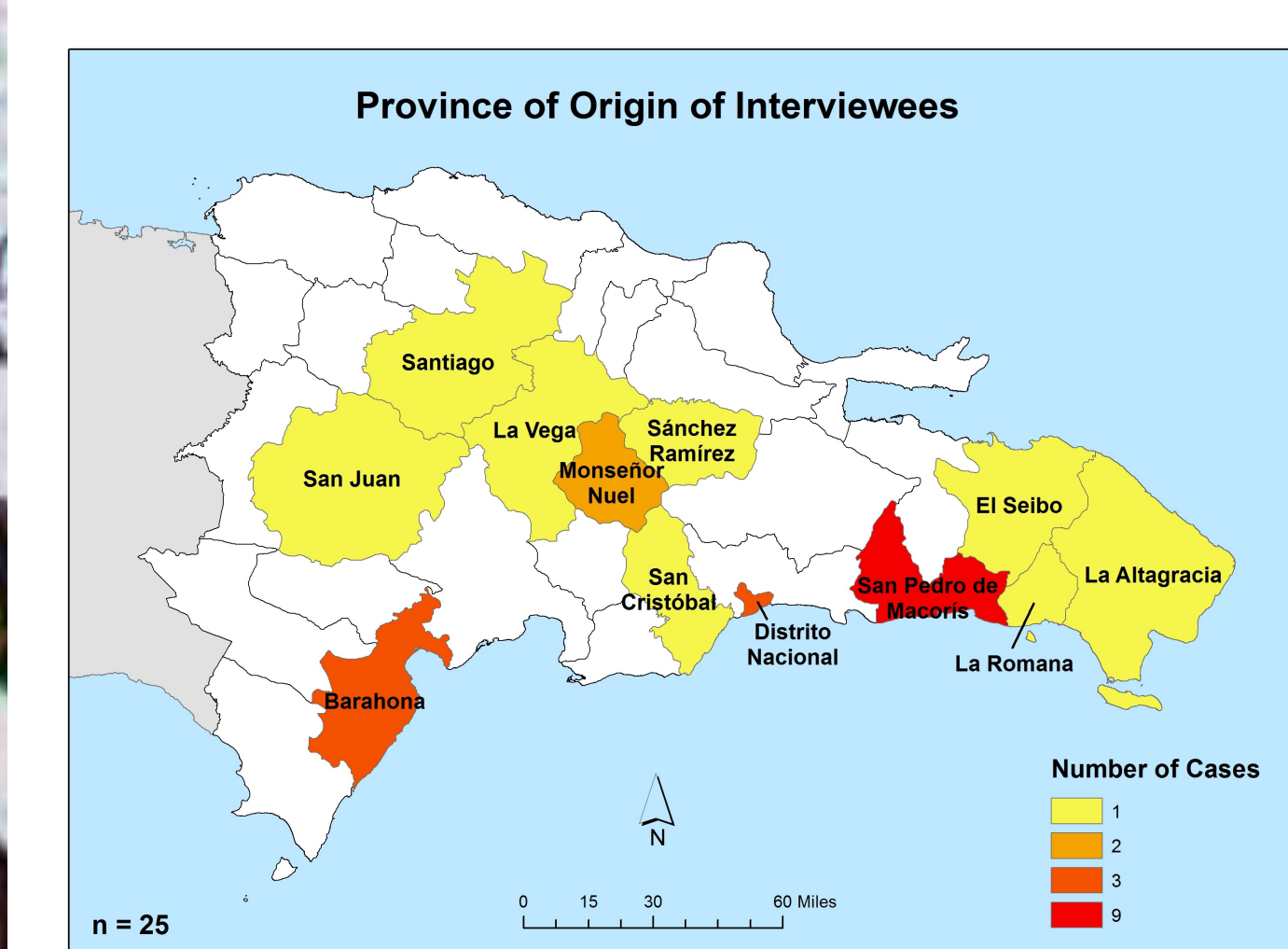
- Who is migrating? When did it begin? What are their motivations?
- Does the Dominican migration to other destination in the Caribbean share any similarity with the migration described in the existing literature?
- How do they learn about the receiving countries in the Caribbean?
- Is this migratory pattern an example of chain migration?

Study Area

- Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
- Basseterre, St. Kitts, St. Kitts and Nevis
- Oranjestad, Aruba
- Willemstad, Curaçao



Source: 2010 Census, Central Bureau of Statistics of Aruba; 2011 Census, Central Bureau of Statistics of Curaçao



Methodology

Due to data limitations, it is not possible to create a detailed profile of the Dominican migrant in the Caribbean. Based on census data for the US Virgin Islands (USVI), Aruba and Curaçao we are only able to present the following:

- Population of Dominican Descent, 1970-2010 (USVI)
- Year of Settlement (Aruba and Curaçao)
- Dominican population by sex (Aruba and Curaçao)
- Age and sex distribution of Dominican population (Aruba)

To fill these gaps, we relied on information provided by two (2) sources. First, an interview with a key informant: Hon. Virginia de van Riet, Consul-General of the Dominican Republic in Curaçao. Second, a series of semi-structured interviews conducted on the islands of St. Thomas (USVI), St. Kitts, Aruba, and Curaçao. The interviewees, who were selected on a snowball sample, were asked the following:

- Age and educational attainment before migrating
- Province of origin in the Dominican Republic
- Year of migration and motivation
- Friends or family members in host country
- Current job occupation

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the Consulate of the Dominican Republic in Curaçao for taking time out of their day to answer all our questions. Special thanks to Prof. Wan Yu from the Department of Geography of the State University of New York at Binghamton for her invaluable comments.

Major Findings

- There are two (2) distinct periods of migration: before 1980's and after 1980's.
- Before 1980's, number of migrants was modest, multiple variables motivated migration.
- After 1980's, number of migrants increased exponentially, motivation was purely economic.
- Large scale migration to destination within the Caribbean began in the late 1980's and continued through the 1990's. This wave of migrant shares the same demographic and social characteristics as those that migrated to Puerto Rico during the same period.
- Dominicans migrated for economic reasons, as a response to the economic crisis in the Dominican Republic. Destinations within the Caribbean were attractive due to lax migratory controls in the late 1980's and early 1990's and, in the case of Aruba, the need for unskilled labor.
- A family member or a friend enticed 76% of our interviewees to migrate to the host country.
- A small group of the f the interviewees (12%) migrated to the receiving country because, as the homeland of one of their ancestors, it was easier to formalize their migratory status.
- Interviews revealed variations in the underlying motivations for migrating to the specific host country.
 - Aruba and Curaçao: possibility of obtaining Dutch citizenship, migrating to Europe.
 - St. Kitts: place of birth of an ancestor, easier process to legalize migratory status.
- In terms of origin, 36% of our interviewees arrived from the province of San Pedro de Macoris. This could be a result of the labor demands created by the sugar cane industry in the early 20th Century. This motivated a migration of worked from other Caribbean islands, some of which settled permanently and/or married Dominican women.
- The Dominican migrant is predominantly female. In the most extreme case (Curaçao) there are 300 Dominican females per 100 Dominican male. Most of the jobs available during the 1980's and 1990's were in occupations traditionally held by women (domestic workers, nanny, prostitution, etc.).
- Family reunification varies between destination. While Dominicans tend to be by themselves in St. Thomas, Dominicans in both Aruba and Curaçao tend to bring the rest of their family once they formalize their legal status.

Year	Dominican Population			Change (%)	Total Population	Percent Population
	Men	Women	Total			
1970	-	-	233	-	62,468	0.4%
1980	227	353	580	149%	96,569	0.6%
1990	847	906	1,753	202%	101,809	1.7%
2000	-	-	3,165	81%	108,612	2.9%
2010	-	-	5,827	84%	106,405	5.5%

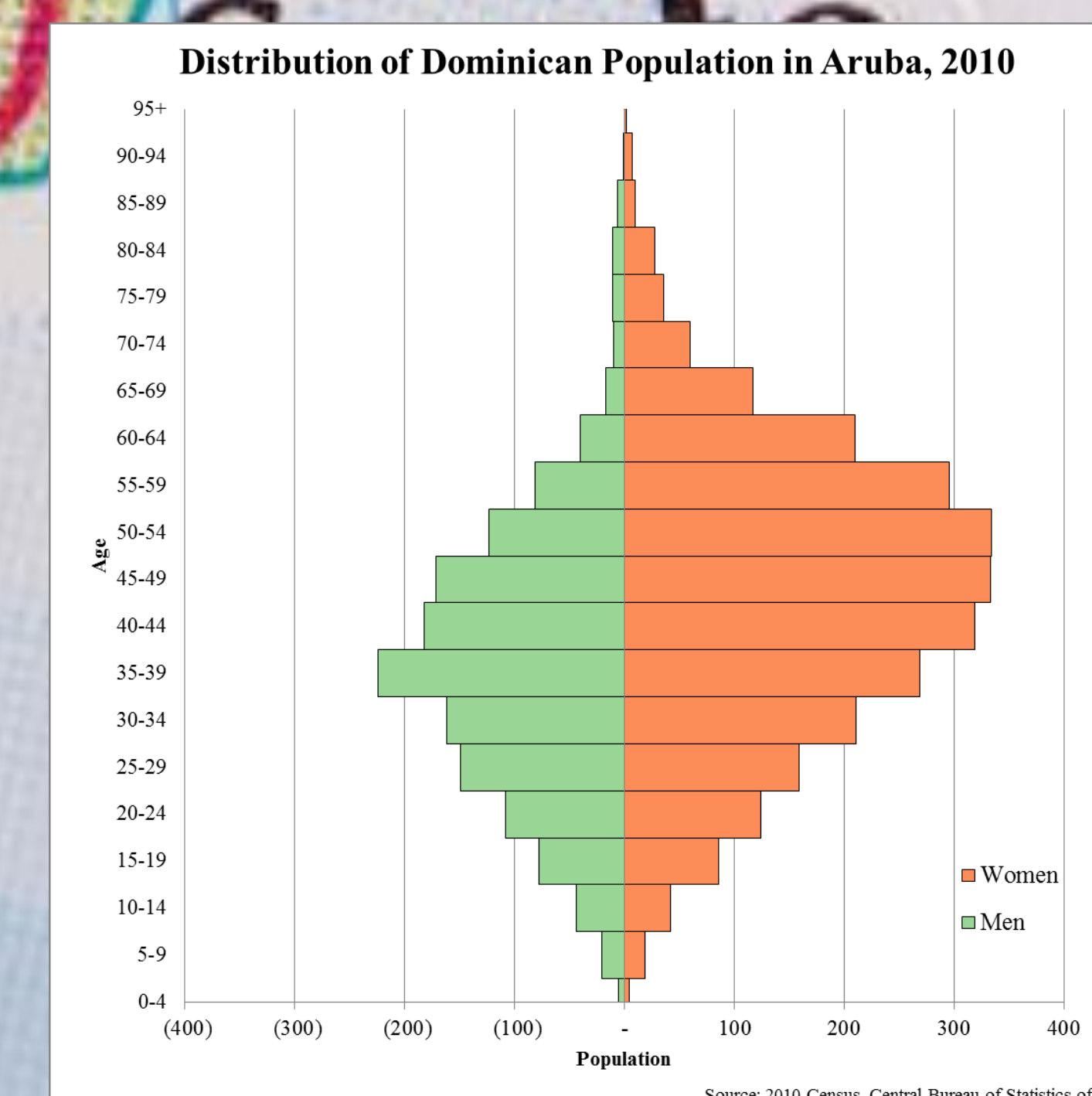
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Year	Dominican Population			Change (%)	Total Population	Percent Population
	Men	Women	Total			
2001	1,086	3,105	4,191	-	130,822	3.2%
2011	1,268	4,137	5,405	29%	150,147	3.6%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of Curaçao

Year	Dominican Population			Change (%)	Total Population	Percent Population
	Men	Women	Total			
1981	-	-	401	-	60,865	0.7%
1991	599	1,638	2,237	458%	67,504	3.3%
2000	1,102	2,589	3,692	65%	91,064	4.1%
2010	1,444	2,669	4,113	11%	101,484	4.1%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics of Aruba



Source: 2010 Census, Central Bureau of Statistics of Aruba



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