



- 1960 1962
- Exodus of 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban minors ages 6-18 to the U.S



Latin American Health Alliance

Latin American Health Alliance (LAHA)

- Treatment center
- 2 recovery houses, Casa Reyes & Casa Mattie

Job Training at Café Reyes

- There were no safe places for residents once they left the program
- Most residents were homeless on admission and therefore had no place to go





Casa Reyes

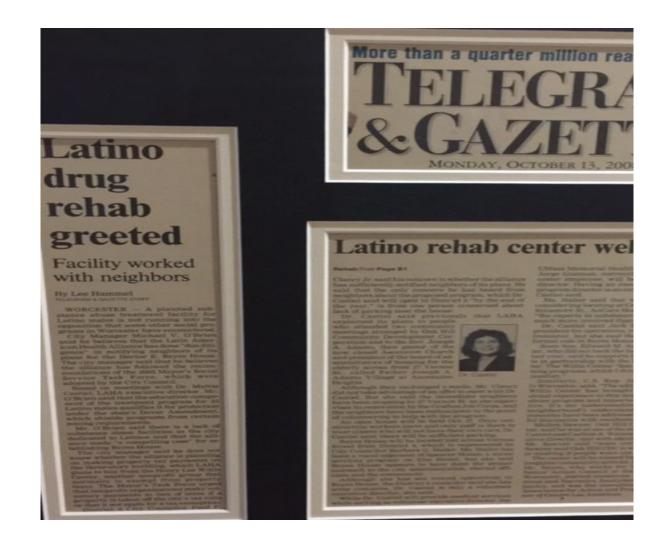








The Challenges



The Impact: Changing Lives, by Improving Lives





Health and Human Services

Public Health

Elder Affairs

Youth Opportunities

Veterans Services

Homelessness

HHS Taskforces & Initiatives



Equity Taskforce

The Mayor's Mental Health Taskforce

Re-entry Taskforce

Housing First Coordinating Council

Opioid Taskforce

Diversion

Crisis Intervention

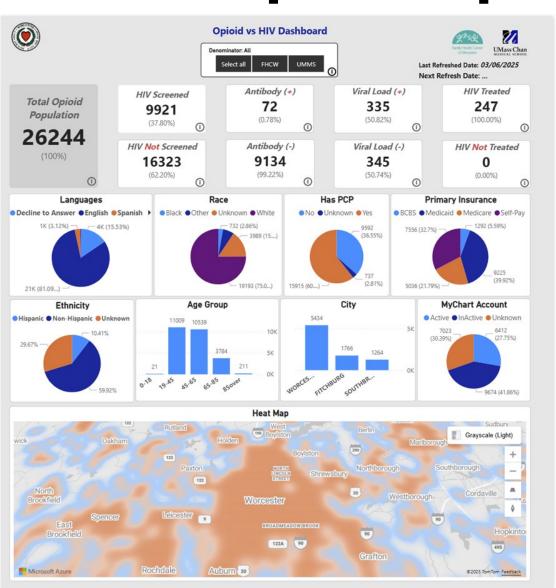
Education of medical students, medical residents, nursing, college, leadership Worcester, and youth

Health Policy Commission

Opioid Remediation Fund

Health Equity Compact

UMass Memorial and UMass Chan Dashboard of Opioid Population

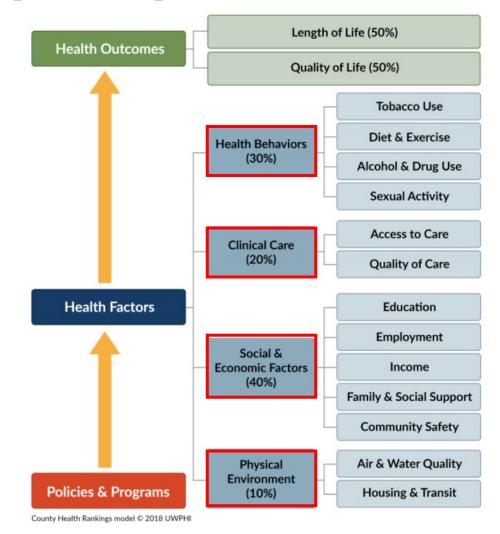


THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (SDOH)

The circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.

These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels.

-World Health Organization



Worcester and Socio-Economic Trends









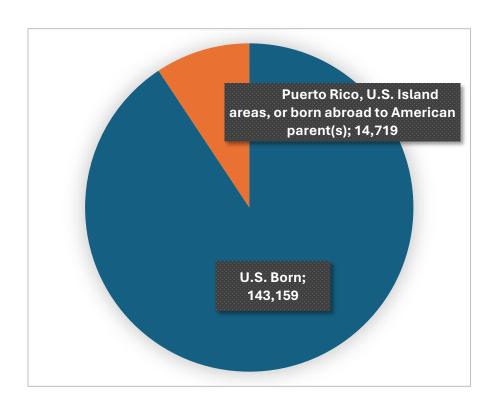
Worcester Population

Total Population: 206,518

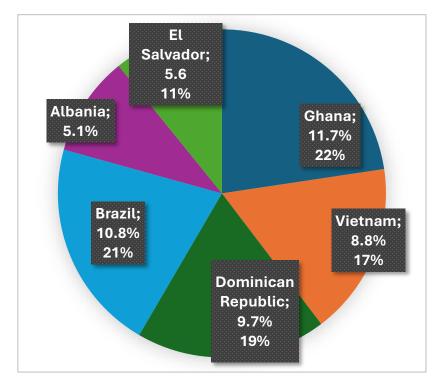
Characteristic	Percent
Between ages 18-24	31.6%
Race Non-White race Black Two or more races	42% 12% 14.9%
Hispanic/Latino ethnicity	24.9%
Education High School Graduate Rate (2023) Have a bachelors degree or higher	85.7% 34.1%
Have any disability	14.7%

Worcester Residents by Country of Origin

US Born Residents



Worcester's Largest Immigrant Communities

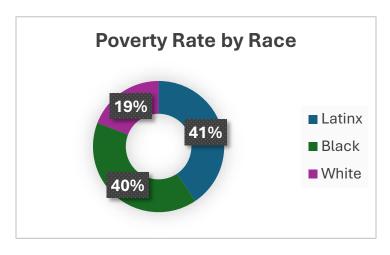


Socio-Economic Trends

National Trends

	Latinx	Black	White
Unemployment rate (2023)	4.6%	5.7%	3.5%
Median Household Income (2023)	\$60,860	\$52,860	\$81,060
Poverty Rate (2023)	16.6%	17.9%	7.7%

Worcester Trends

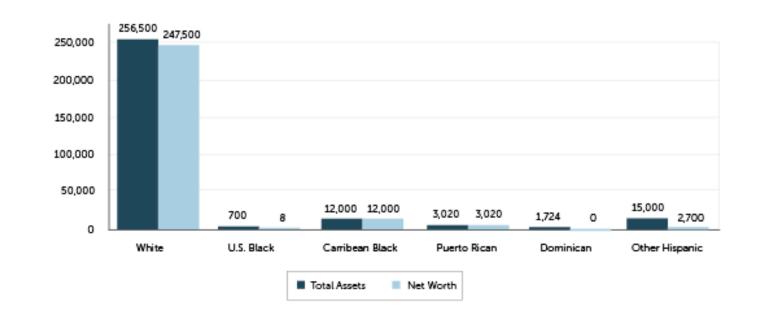


	Latinx	Black	White
Unemployment Rate (2022)	7.5 %	7.4%	5.7%
Median Household Income (2023)	\$48,079	\$65,973	\$80,035

The Wealth Gap: Total assets vs Net Worth

A 2015 study by Duke University, The New School, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that:

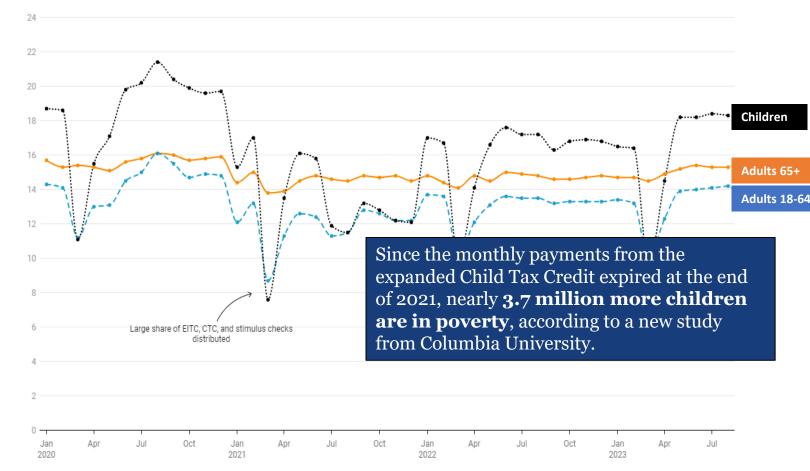
- ☐ The net worth of US Black Bostonians is \$8
- ☐ Close to half of Puerto
 Ricans and a quarter of
 Black people don't have
 either a savings or checking
 account, compared to only
 7% of whites.



Effects of child poverty in adulthood

- Childhood poverty is associated with increased health concerns, independent of socioeconomic status
 - Risk of coronary heart disease
 - Risk of stroke
 - Earlier mortality
 - Toxic stress
- The likelihood of being poor in adulthood increases with the number of years spent in poverty as a child.

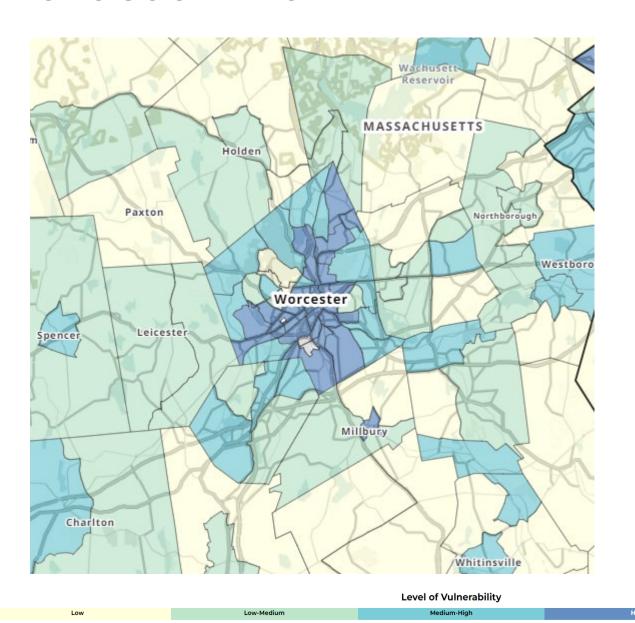
Monthly Poverty Rates by Age Group (All Taxes/Transfers Included)

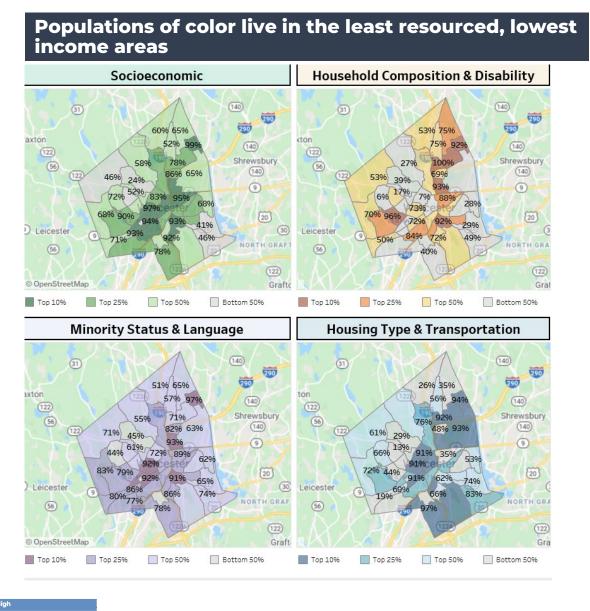


Based on methodology introduced in Parolin, Curran, Matsudaira, Waldfogel, and Wimer (2020).

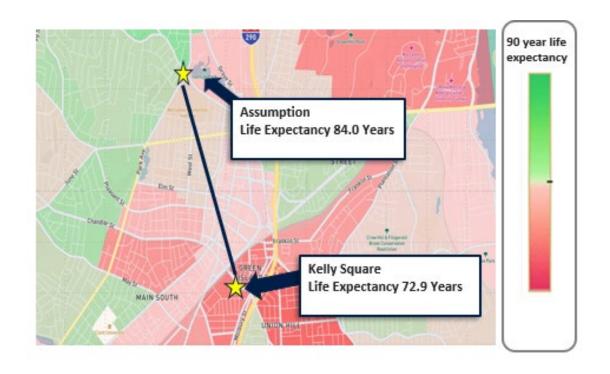
Source: Estimates from Center on Poverty & Social Policy at Columbia University • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

CDC SOCIAL VULNERABILITY INDEX 2020: CITY OF WORCESTER



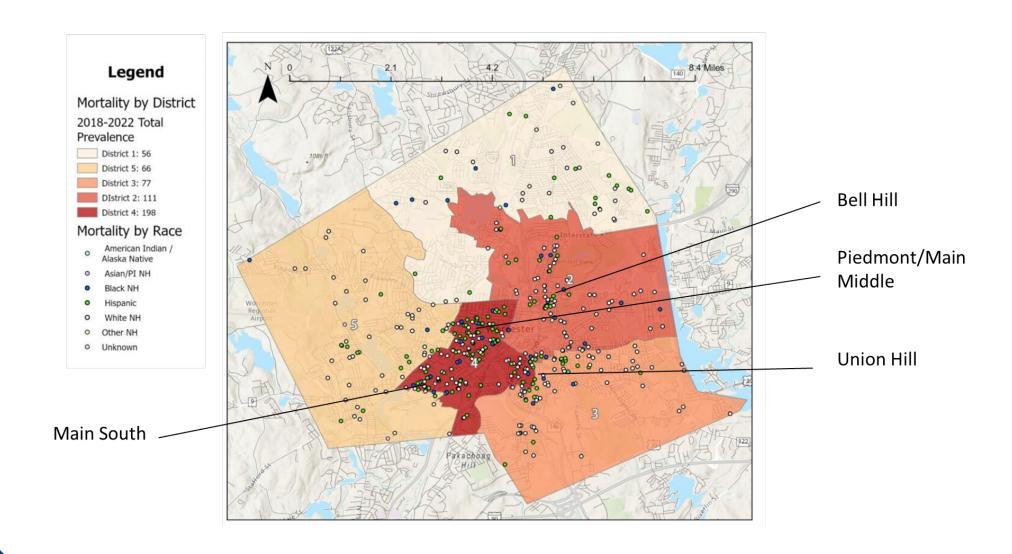


2 miles apart, 11.1 years of life expectancy difference



	Life Expectancy at Birth (years)
Massachusetts	80.7
USA	78.8
Cuba	78.5
Albania	76.4
Vietnam	76.3
Honduras	75.2
Worcester Main South	74.1
Venezuela	74.1
Worcester Kelley Square	72.9
Bangladesh	72.7
Libya	71.9
Worcester Union Hill	71.6

Worcester All-Cause Mortality by District



Hazards are located largely in Latino and Black communities throughout Worcester

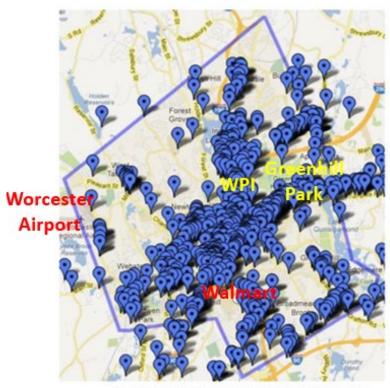
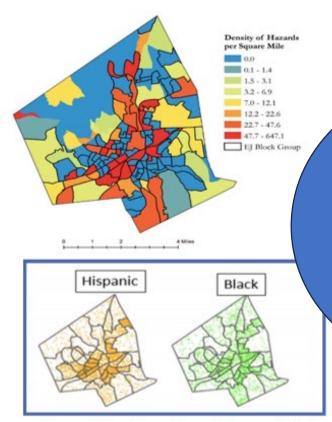


Figure 9: Map of ALL Environmental Hazard Distribution in Worcester, MA

Worcester



Lead Paint
Mold
Pollution
Train Storage
Factories
Gas Stations
Underground
storage tanks

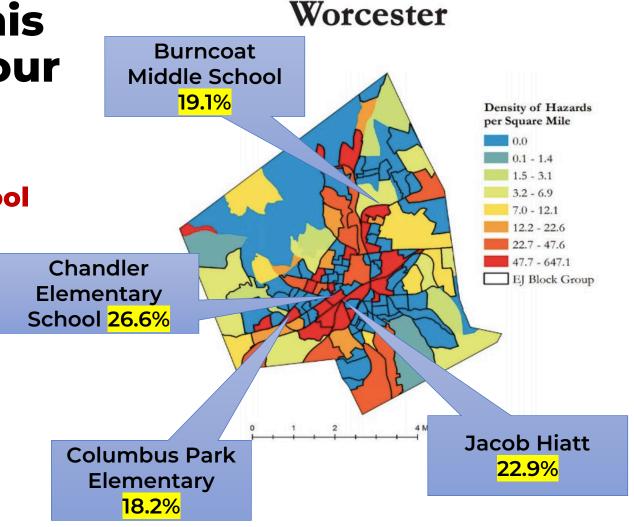
Bowen, M. et al., 2012. "Environmental Injustice In Five Worcester Communities The Role of Income, Race, and Education on Une qual Exposure to Environmental Hazards." Worcester Polytechnical Institute.

Schlegal, C. 2016. "Unequal Exposure in Massachusetts: An Analysis of Environmental Hazards of Towns and Block Groups." Tufts University.

What does this look like for our community?

% of students in school with Asthma

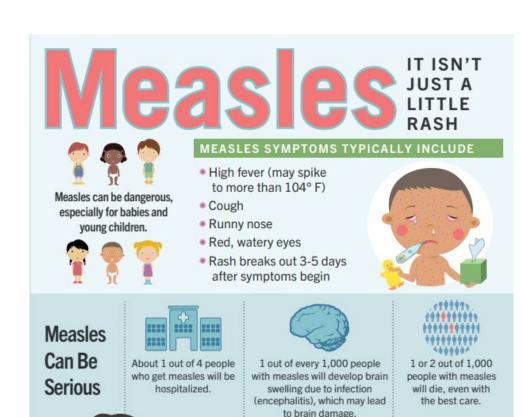
Nationally, 8-10% of children between the ages of 5-11 have asthma.



Worcester Public Schools. 2019.

Measles Outbreak

- Measles is an airborne, extremely infectious, and potentially severe rash illness
- The U.S. declared measles eliminated in 2000, however, recent outbreaks have occurred, with 301 cases in the U.S. as of 3/14/2025.
 - 50 cases hospitalized
 - 2 deaths
 - 0 cases confirmed in MA
- Prevention Measures
 - Vaccination Two doses of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine are 97% effective at preventing measles
 - Speak to a healthcare provider about symptoms and before travel





You have the power to protect your child.

Provide your children with safe and long-lasting protection against measles by making sure they get the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine according to CDC's recommended immunization schedule.

Avian Influenza (H5N1 Bird Flu)

- Widespread circulation of avian influenza virus in wild birds, poultry, and sporadic infections in mammals like cows.
- The risk to the general public remains low.
- There have been 70 confirmed human cases since March 2024.
 - Case Exposures include: Dairy Herds (Cattle), Poultry Farms and Culling Operations, Other Animal Exposures, and unknown sources
- Prevention Measures
 - Avoid contact with dead or infected birds and bird droppings, feathers, or other bodily fluid
 - Monitor poultry for signs of illness and reduce backyard birds' exposure to wild birds
 - Practice food safety by cooking poultry thoroughly, using separate cutting boards, and pasteurizing milk
 - · Disinfect shoes, clothes, egg trays, vehicles, etc.



Covid Pandemic: Where are we now?

- From January 1, 2020 to February 2025 in Worcester:
 - 880 confirmed and probable covid deaths
 - 71,615 confirmed and probable infections
 - 16% of the population has received a covid booster since June
- From 2020-2023, the proportion of confirmed covid cases among the Hispanic/Latino population represented 26% of cases while only making up only 25% of the Worcester population.
- In 2021, the Black(non-Hispanic) population had the highest age-adjusted mortality rate due to Covid-19 at 130.4 per 100,000 persons









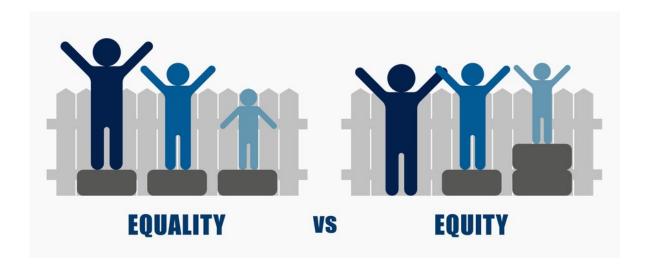








A closer look at the disparities and the inequalities at play



Racism structures opportunity and assigns value based on how a person looks.



The result: conditions that unfairly advantage some and unfairly disadvantage others.

Racism hurts the health of our nation by preventing some people the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

Racism may be intentional or unintentional. It operates at various levels in society.

Racism is a driving force of the social determinants of health (like housing, education and employment) and is a barrier to health equity.













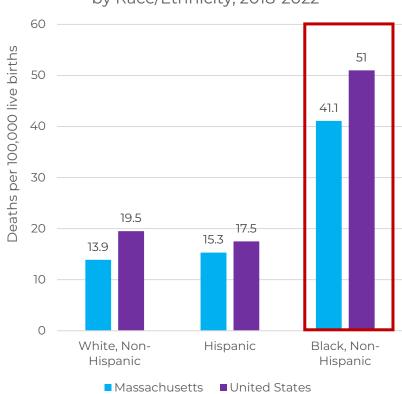


National Maternal Mortality

Ranks #8 in the country 16.4/100,000 live births

Maternal Mortality Rate

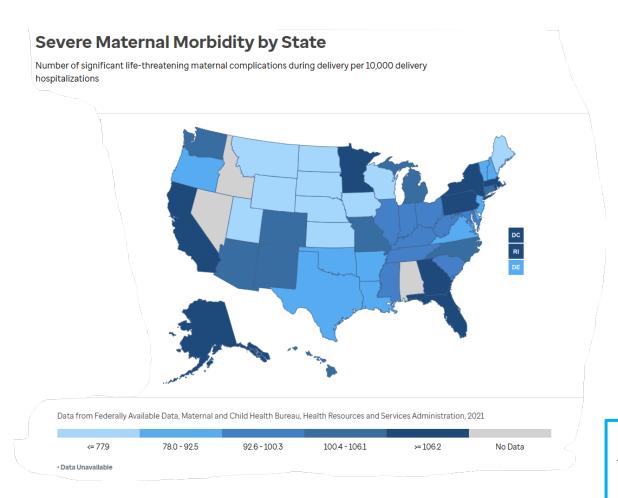
by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-2022



Even though MA is ranked high for the number of live births, the rate for maternal deaths related to pregnancy among Black women remains significantly higher than other populations.

Maternal Morbidity in Massachusetts

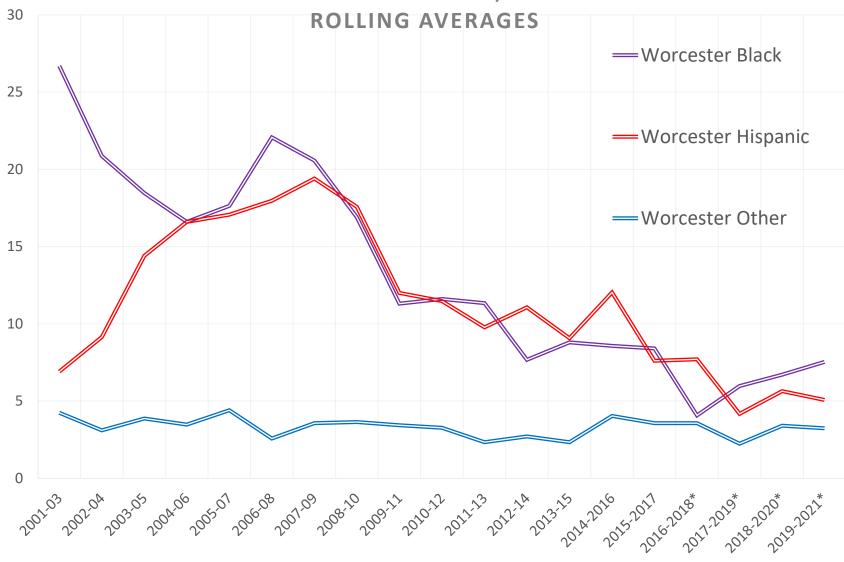
Ranks 45 in the country; 117.5/10,000 deliveries



Top States	Rank	Value
Nebraska	1	60.1
North Dakota	2	63.7
South Dakota	3	66.3
Kansas	4	70.7
Utah	5	72.0
Bottom States	Rank	Value
Bottom States Florida	Rank 43	Value
Florida	43	114.7
Florida Rhode Island	43 44	114.7 114.8

MA has one of the **highest morbidity rates** in the country, at a rate of 117.5 per 10,000 delivery hospitalizations.

INFANT MORTALITY RATE BY RACE, WORCESTER: 3-YEAR



The rates of infant mortality in Worcester are highest among Black and Hispanic communities and mortality rates have increased over time.

**Other race/ ethnicity: includes Asian/PI NH, AIAN, White, Other, and Unknown.

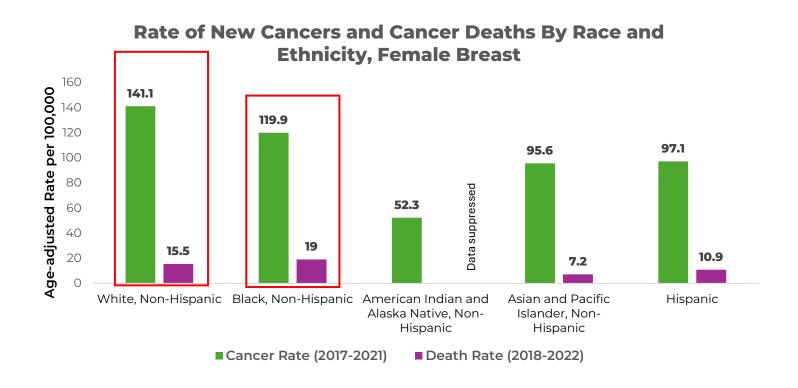
Chronic Health Conditions Disparities

Prostate cancer incidence among Black men in the US is 60% higher and mortality is more than double the rate observed in white men

Black and Hispanic/Latinx have a higher prevalence of **diabetes** (type 1 or 2) and hypertension compared to other race/ethnicities.

Black and Hispanic/Latinx have significantly higher ED visit rates for **diabetes** and **asthma**.

Female Breast Cancer in MA



☐ White women have the **highest rate of breast cancer**, and Black women have the **highest death mortality rate** for breast cancer in MA.

Unhealthy lifestyles are risk factors for chronic health conditions

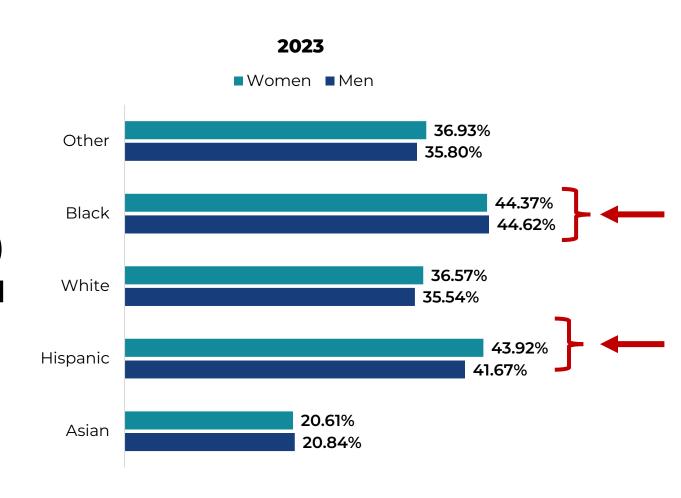


- High processed diets
- Fast food, refined carbs, added sugar, processed grains
- Charred and deep-fried foods produce carcinogenic compounds
- Food deserts and lack of access/affordability to healthy alternatives



Obesity: Prevalence in Worcester

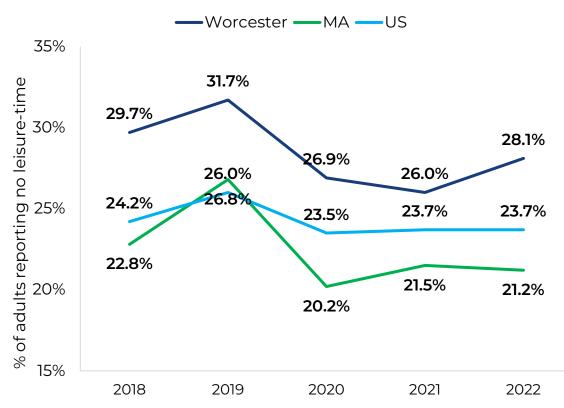
- Obesity increases inflammation, insulin resistance, and hormone imbalances, all of which contribute to chronic health conditions
- The United States has a higher obesity rates (over 40% of adults)
- Black and Hispanic people had the highest prevalence of obesity in the City of Worcester in 2023



Physical Activity

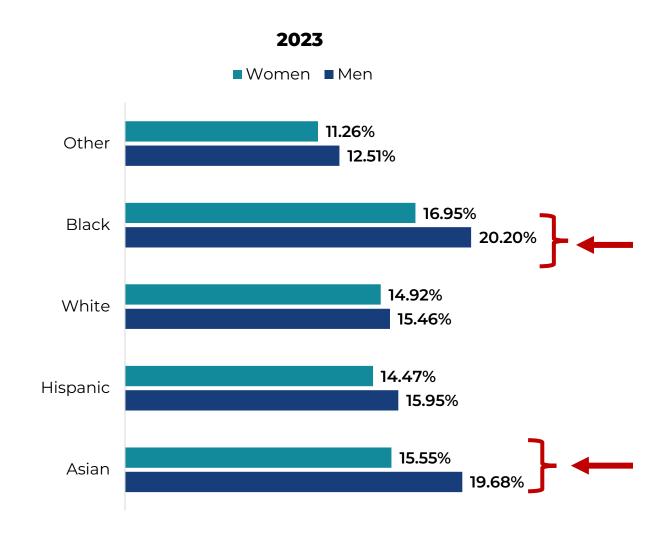
- The United States tends to have a sedentary lifestyle, lack of physical activity
- About 31 million adults 50 or older in the U.S. are inactive, meaning they do not get physical activity beyond that of daily living.
- Physical activity is beneficial for reducing risks of developing chronic health conditions
- Self-reported physical inactivity in the City of Worcester is higher than state and national-level

Percentage of Adults Reporting No Leisure-time for Physical Activity (2018-2022)



DIABETES PREVALENCE IN WORCESTER

 Black and Asian men had the highest prevalence of diabetes in the City of Worcester in 2023

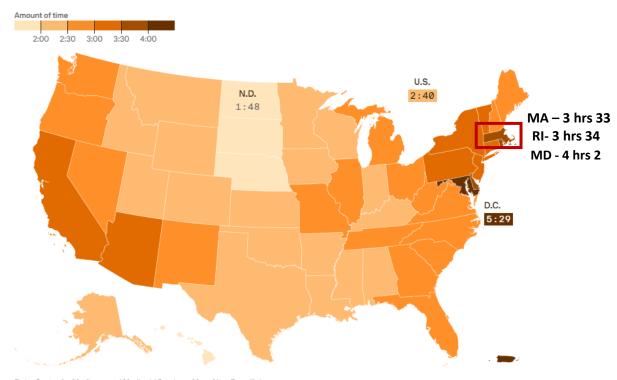


Source: MA Health Data Tool, Link

Primary Care Crisis in MA

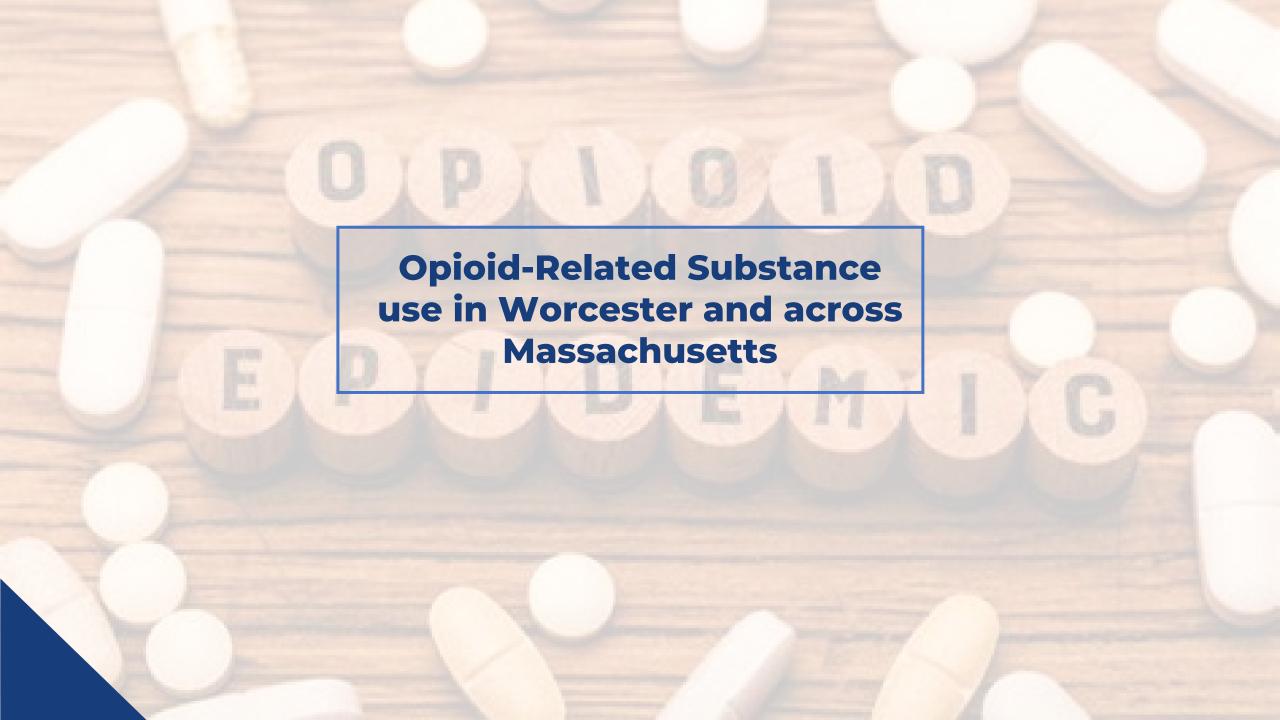
Median time, in hours, patients spent in hospital emergency rooms

October 2021 to September 2022



Data: Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services; Map: Alice Feng/Axios

- The number of primary care physicians **declined** between 2014 and 2020 (from 26.7% to 24.7%).
 - Low Reimbursement
 - High administrative burden
 - Increased provider burnout
 - Early retirement
 - Concierge practice
- In 2023, 41% of Massachusetts residents reported difficulty accessing care.
 - 66.1% sought care in the ED
 - MA, 3rd longest wait time 3.5 hours
 - Commercial growth exceeded Medicare and MassHealth 2019-2022
- 2nd highest family health insurance premiums in the US. Average premium \$29,000



The ACES

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES - ACES

How Adverse Childhood Experiences
Impact Health and Well-being
Throughout the Course of Life

Disease, Disability & Social Problems

Adoption of Health-Risk Behaviors

Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment

Disrupted Neurodevelopment

Adverse Childhood Experiences

What happens to kids during childhood shapes who they become as adults



americanspcc.org
The Nation's Voice for Children
*Center for Disease Control

ACEs Can Increase Risk for Disease, Early Death, and Poor Social Outcomes

Research shows that **experiencing a higher number of ACEs** is associated with **many of the leading causes of death** like heart disease and cancer.



CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

- · Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Cancer
- Kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Obesity



MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Depression
- SmokingHeavy drinking or alcoholism
- Substance misuse
- Physical inactivity
- Risky sexual behavior
- Suicidal thoughts and behavior



HEALTH RISK BEHAVIORS

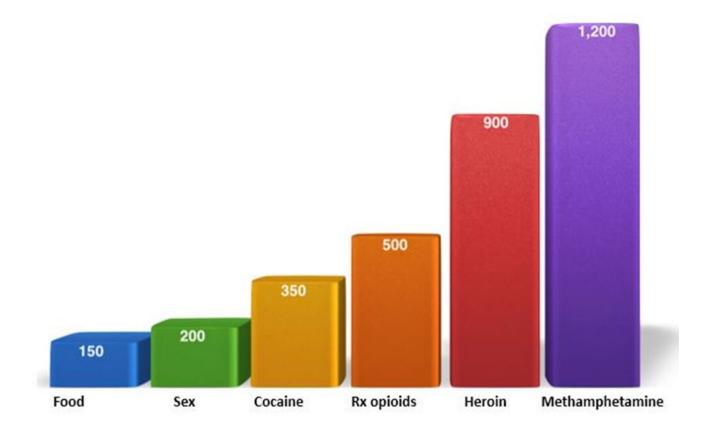
- Lack insura
 - Unemployment



SOCIAL OUTCOMES

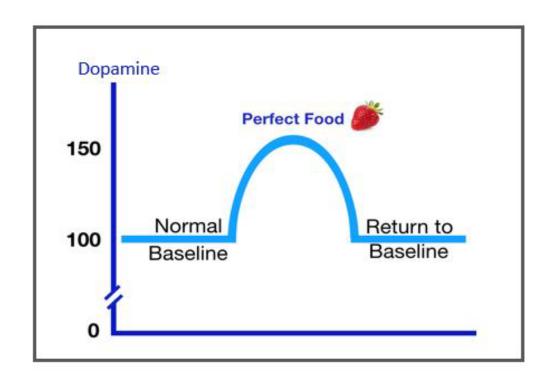
- Lack of health insurance
- Less than high school diploma or equivalent education

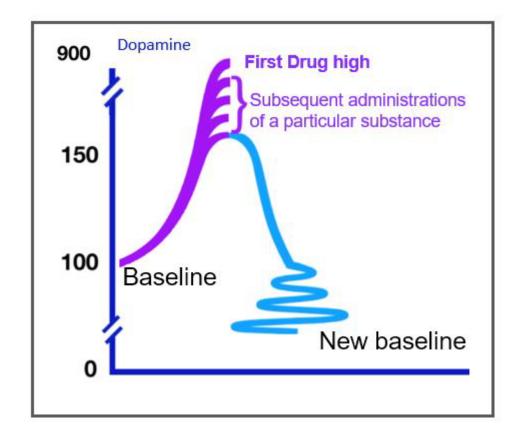
Substance misuse can raise our dopamine much higher than natural reinforcers.



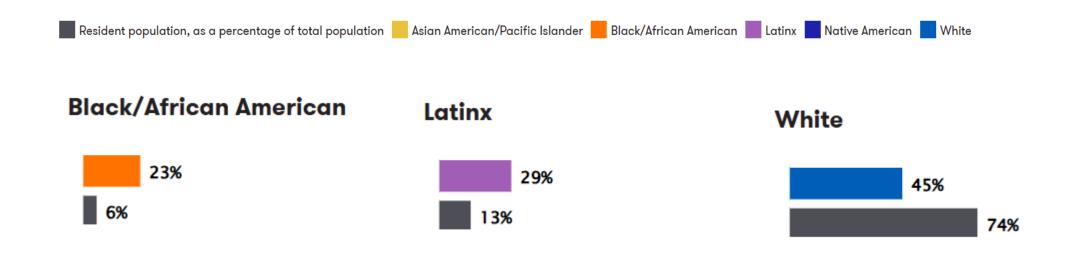
dopamine

Comparative Levels of Dopamine Release





Racial Disparities in Incarceration, Worcester (2024)

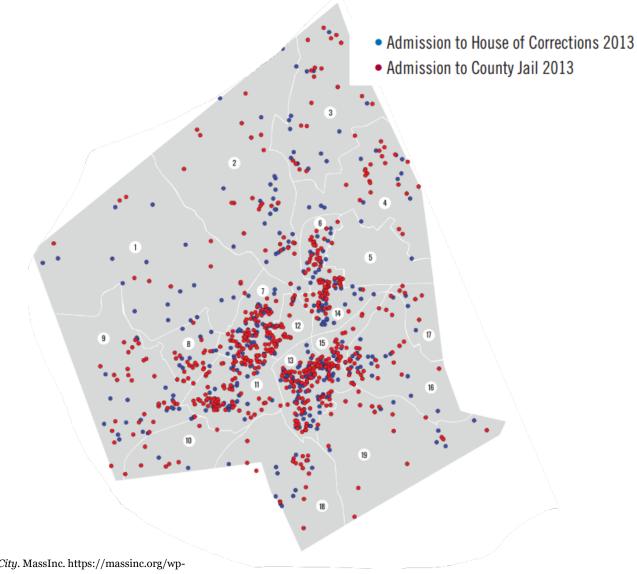


☐ Black people are incarcerated the most at strikingly higher rates in jails and prisons across the country.

Diversion Program

Most incarcerations come from low-income, high people of color neighborhoods

- 1. West Side
- 2. North Side
- 3. Burncoat Greendale
- 4. North Lincoln
- 5. Biotech Park Area
- 6. Lower Lincoln
- 7. Greater Piedmont
- 8. Columbus Park
- 9. Webster Square
- 10. Hadwen Park
- 11. Main South
- 12. Central Business District
- 13. Greater Vernon Hill
- 14. Shrewsbury Street
- 15. Franklin Plantation
- 16. Grafton Hill
- 17. Lake Park
- 18. Quinsigamond Village
- 19. Broadmeadow Brook



Source: Forman, B.; Rennert, L. (2017). *The Geography of Incarceration in a gateway City*. MassInc. https://massinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/geography.crime .report.8.pdf

What are **Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)?**















Research shows that when PCEs are actively promoted during early childhood, adult mental health risks are significantly reduced!

Reducing ACEs and improving PCEs in childhood can reduce negative physical and mental outcomes.

Mobile Efforts





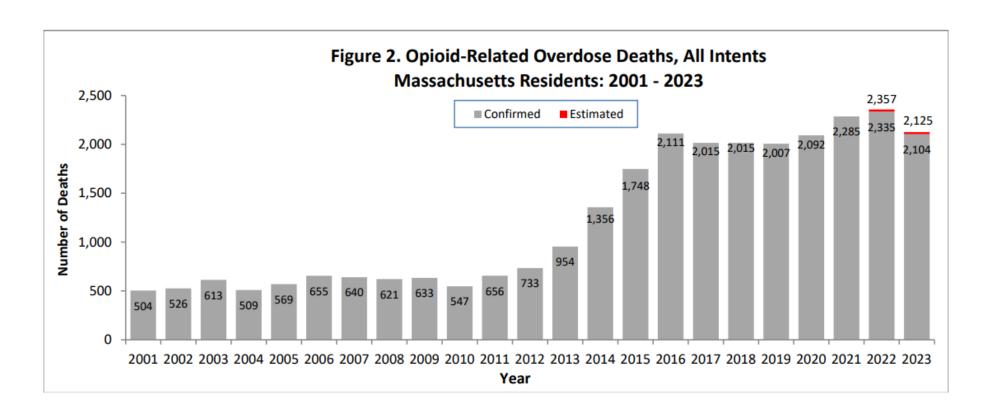


ROAD TO CARE VAN

SPECTRUM VAN

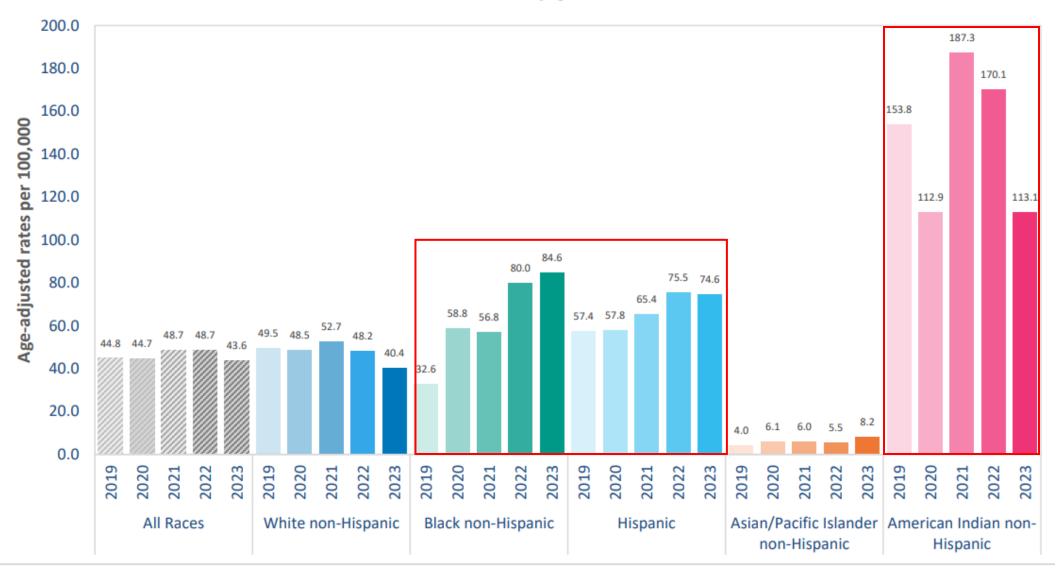
SUBOXONE IN THE AMBULANCE

Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths All Intents MA Residents: 2001 - 2023

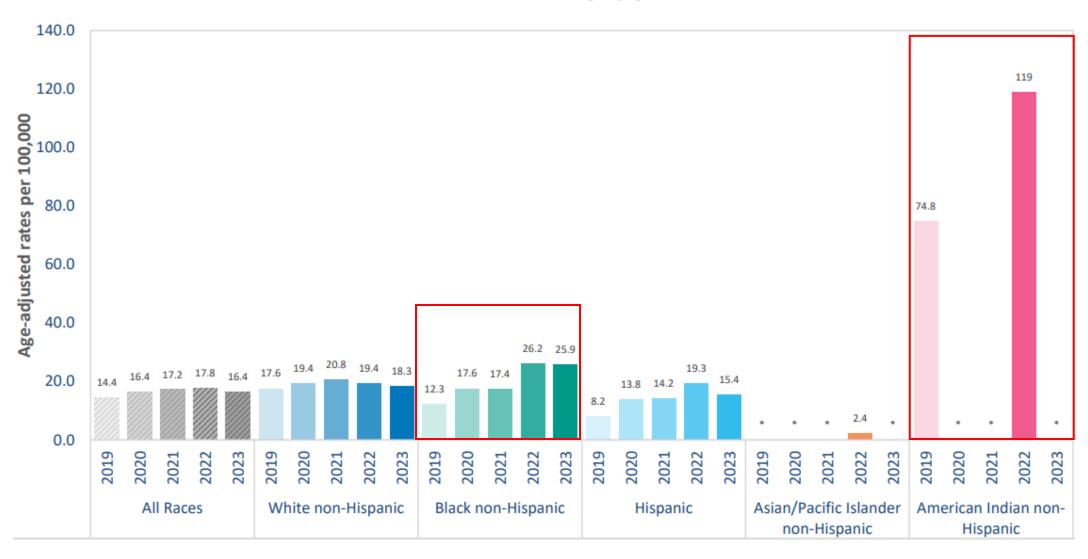


- ☐ There were 2,104 confirmed opioid-related overdose deaths in 2023.
- ☐ The 2023 opioid-related overdose death rate is 10% lower than in 2022 and is the first significant decline we have seen. **Yet, the numbers remain incredibly high.**

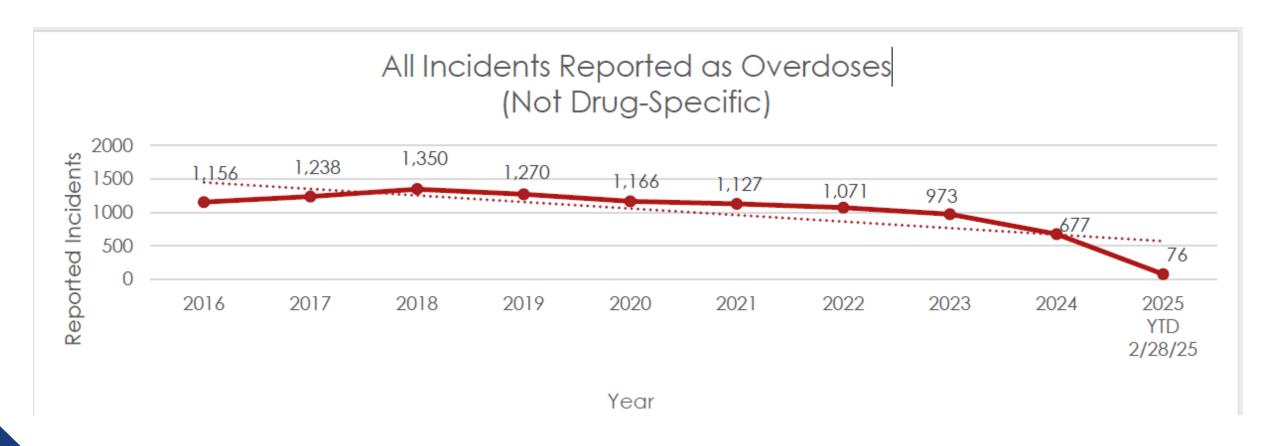
Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Rates, All Intents, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity Male



Confirmed Opioid-Related Overdose Rates, All Intents, by Race and Hispanic Ethnicity Female



Long Term Overdose Trends (10 Years), Worcester (WPD)



Confirmed & Suspected Heroin/Opiate-Related Overdoses in Worcester, monthly



Top Locations for	Repeat ODs*
2 WASHINGTON SQ	52
611 MAIN ST	21
20 TEMPLE ST	18
60 FOSTER ST	12
455 MAIN ST	12
25 QUEEN ST	10
810 MAIN ST	8
3 SALEM SQ	8
107 LINCOLN ST	8
1183 MAIN ST	7
44 TEMPLE ST	6
12 QUEEN ST	6

raiding Northbers should diways be considered remained due to delays in receiving Me report

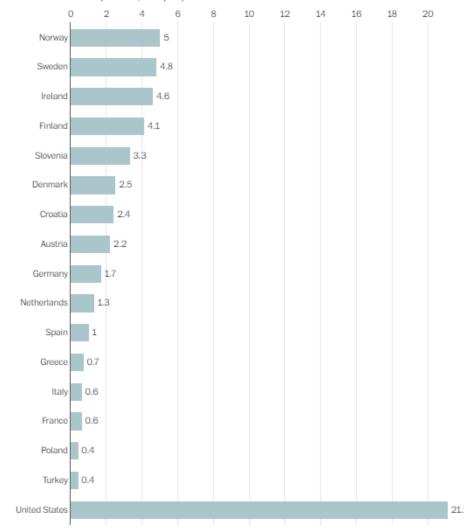
The U.S. stands out from other wealthy countries



- □ 4x greater than Norway, Sweden, and Ireland
- □ **12x** greater than Germany
- □ 21x greater than Spain, Italy, and France

Drug deaths for the European Union, Turkey and Norway, plus the United States, 2019

Annual death rate per 100,000 people.



Drug-caused deaths age 15-64, except Germany and Greece are all ages.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug

Addiction

DAN KEATING / THE WASHINGTON POST

Overdose Prevention: What can we do?

Narcan Awareness

Narcan is naloxone hydrochloride (nasal spray, injectable, auto-injector) used to reverse an opioid overdose, including heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioid medications.

Who should carry Narcan?

- You can! It is safe and easy to use
- Carrying naloxone provides an extra layer of protection for those at a higher risk for overdose

Where can I get it?

• OTC, Pharmacies, Qualified organizations, Naloxone Distribution Programs

But first, receive Naloxone training!

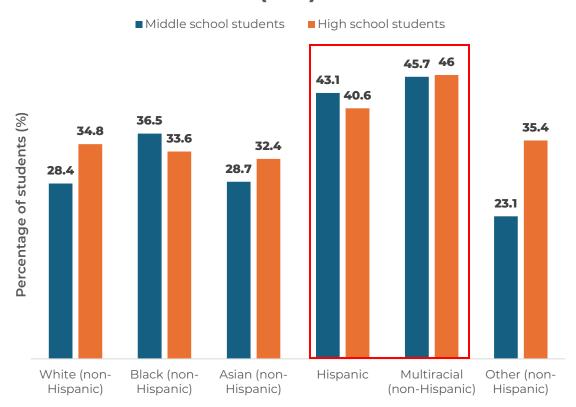
- Online Training videos
- BSAS Harm Reduction Program Locator
- Qualified organizations



Youth Health Outcomes

Youth Mental Health Burden

Sad/hopeless symptoms by race/ethnic group (2021)



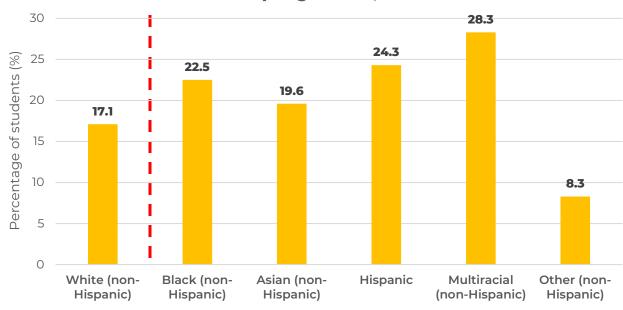
 Middle school and high students from Worcester were asked:

In the past 12 months, have you ever felt so sad or hopeless that you stopped doing some of your normal activities?

- Almost half of <u>multiracial</u> students from middle school and high school answered "yes".
- A **high percentage** of <u>Hispanic</u> youth answered "yes".

Youth Mental Health Burden

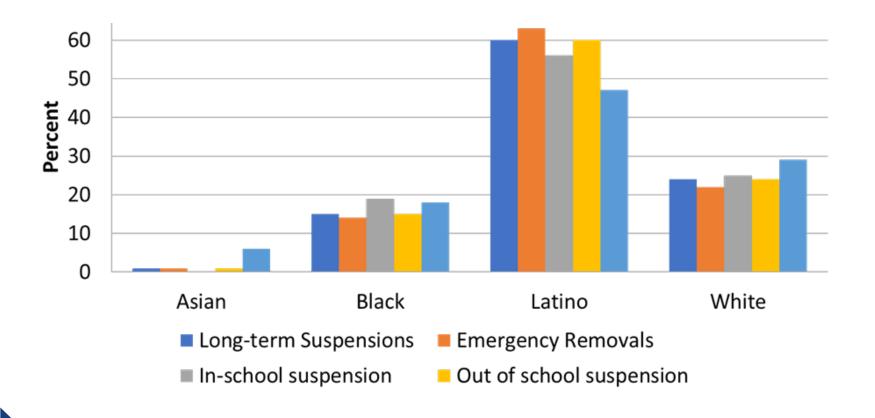




Among Worcester youth, in the past 12 months:

- Students of color from both middle schools and high schools are experiencing more suicide ideation or attempt mental health outcomes than white students.
- 303 middle school students attempted to take their own life within 12 months of being surveyed, displaying concern for the mental health burden of middle school-aged students.

Latinx students more likely to experience exclusionary disciplinary practices



Black and Latino communities make up 30% of Worcester's total population, but 53% of DCF under 18

Latino individuals are 3x more likely to experience almost all types of exclusionary disciplinary practices

Youth (Middle and High School Students) Perception of Substances



Tobacco use has **declined** for youth since 2013 and their perception of harm of electronic nicotine vape products has **increased.**



The prevalence of alcohol use is **decreasing** among youth, yet they have a **decreased** perception of the risks of alcohol.



Marijuana use is **decreasing** among youth and perception of risk is **increasing**.



Shelters in Worcester

- 149 adult shelter beds are available in Worcester, not including the SMOC Winter Shelter
- Some of these beds are reserved for special population, such as veteran or female only populations.
- Given an average shelter attendance of 251, this suggests that city shelters routinely operate above capacity.
- **15-20 beds** for trafficked women opened March 17, 2025

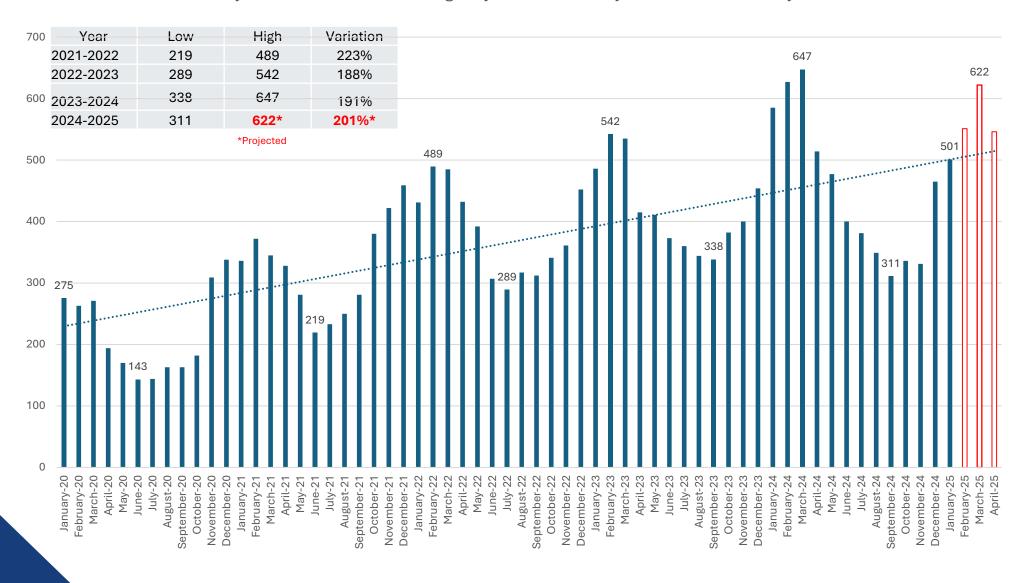
SMOC 25 Queen St	All Genders	94 Beds
SMOC MLK	All Genders	34 Beds
Abby's House	Female	18 Beds
Veterans Inc Sheridan	Female	14 Beds
Veterans Inc Canterbury	All Genders	20 Beds
Total Worcester Adult Shelter Beds		180 Beds

Housing First Coordinating Council/Housing Projects

- □Lewis Street: Successfully finished 24 single occupancy housing units on October 31st, 2023.
- □Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) at 6 Wyman St: Completed 16 single occupancy housing units on February 1, 2024.
- Quality Inn Hotel by Worcester Community Housing Resources (WCHR): Currently underway to convert a hotel into 90 units of permanent supportive housing, scheduled for completion by 2025.
- □SMOC: Developing 20 single occupancy housing units at their Martin Luther King (MLK) site, also set to be completed by 2026
- □SMOC at 30 Winfield St: In the process of constructing a three-story building featuring 18 studio micro-units, expected to be finished by 2026
- □Worcester Community Housing Resources: A village of 20 modular homes, expected to be finished by 2026.



City of Worcester **Adult** Emergency Shelter monthly enrollment summary



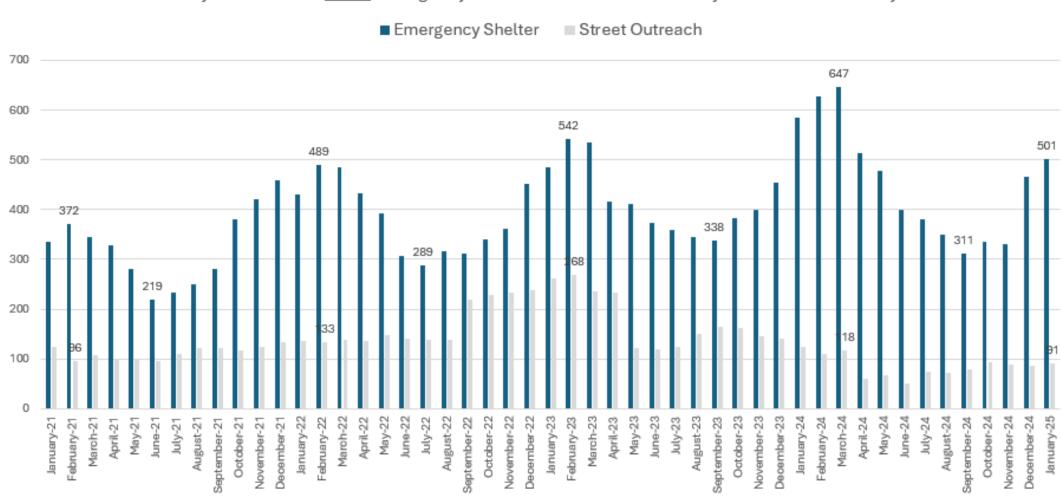
On average adults entering shelter over the last 12 months reported a monthly income of \$1,011.29 per month and 98% reported income below the HUD extremely low income threshold \$27,050 annually.

According to the marketing firm
Apartments.com
"you can expect to pay about \$1,563
per month for a studio apartment in the City of Worcester."

^{*}Numbers summarized here reflect a total number served in shelter over the course of a month and not necessarily on the same night.



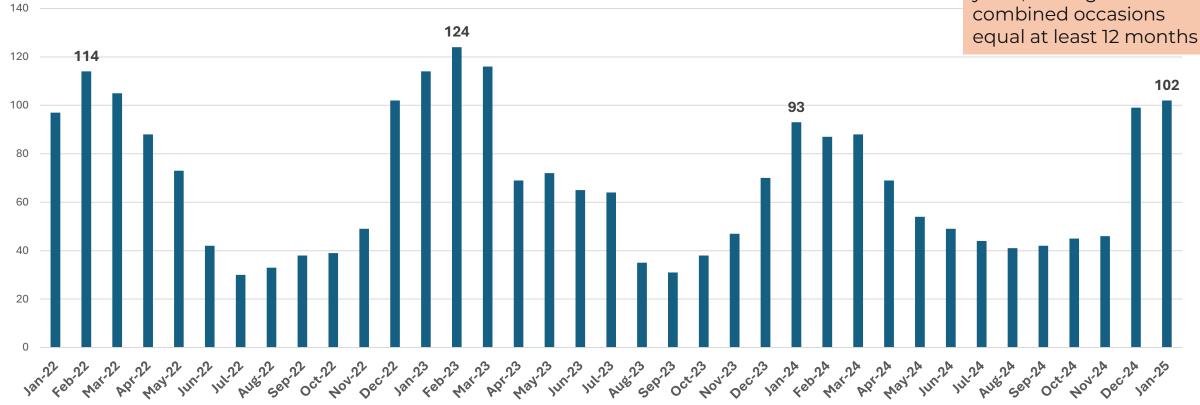
City of Worcester Adult Emergency Shelter and Outreach monthly enrollment summary





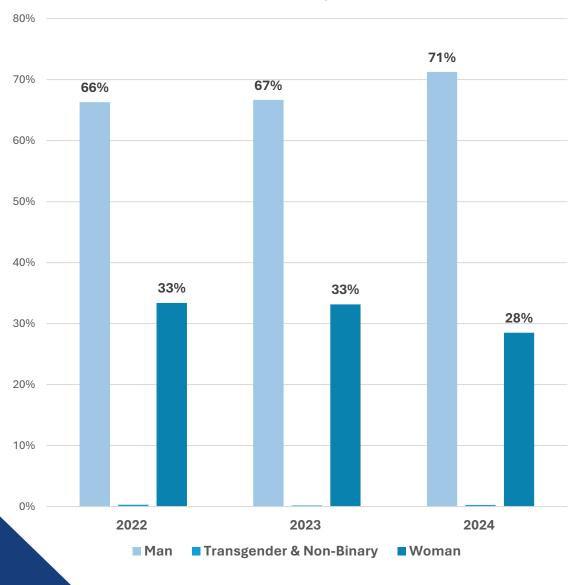
Chronically Homeless enrolled in adult shelter or outreach in the City of Worcester

Chronically homeless: has been homeless for at least 12 months or on at least 4 separate occasions in the last 3 years, as long as the combined occasions equal at least 12 months

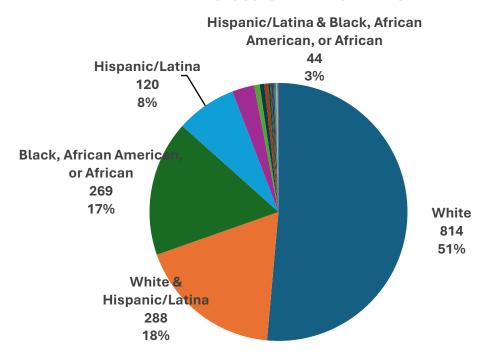




Gender over time at city adult shelters



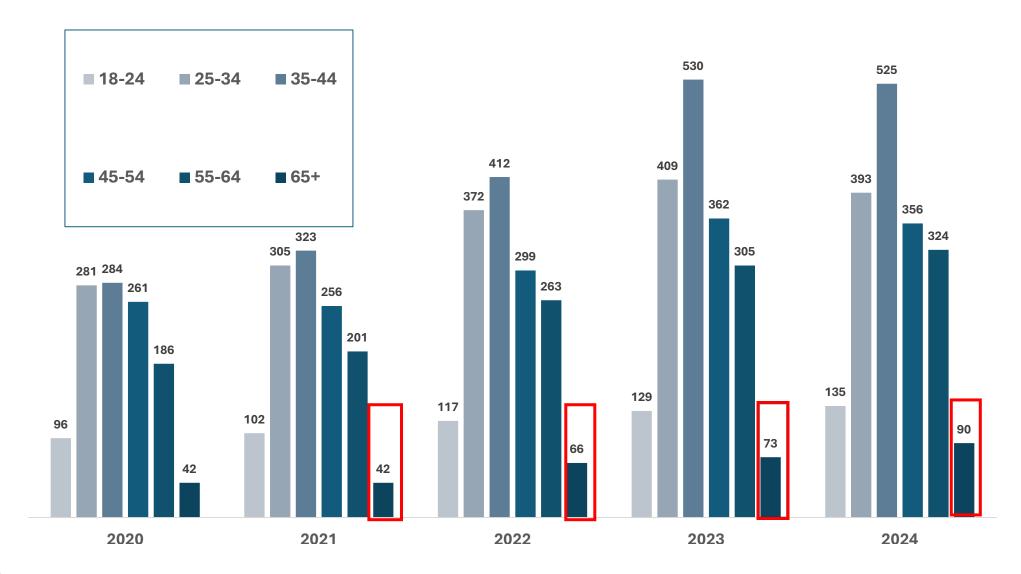
Race and Ethnicity of adults sheltered and unsheltered in Worcester - 12 month view



US Census City of Worcester Race and Ethnicity Ratios				
Hispanic or Latino	24.57%			
Not Hispanic or Latino:	75.43%			
White alone	48.93%			
Black or African American alone	13.74%			
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.16%			
Asian alone	7.05%			
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.02%			
Some Other Race alone	1.28%			
Population of two or more races:	4.25%			

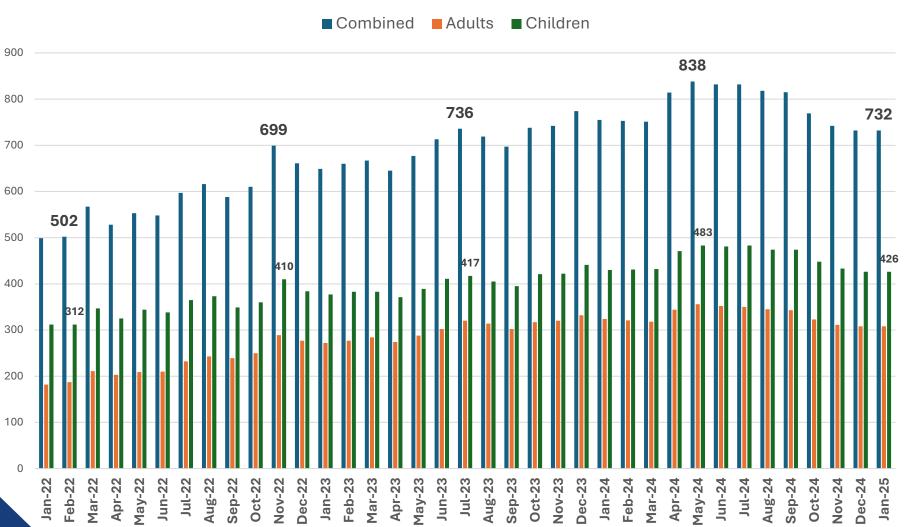


Population by Age Group 2020-2024 sheltered and unsheltered over a five year view





City of Worcester Family Shelter enrollment summarized monthly Includes hotel shelters



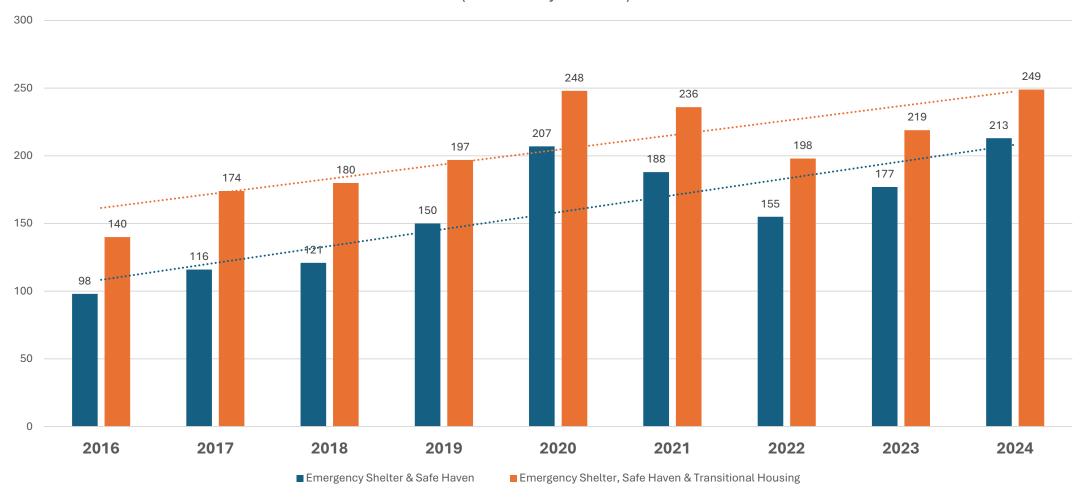
A total of **323**households with **660**homeless children
under the age of 18
stayed with their
families in state funded
family shelter within
the City of Worcester
over the last 12 months.

The average age among this group of children was less than **6 years** old.

The average household income reported by these families was \$1,006.



Worcester County Average Length of Time Homeless (Days)* (Preliminary for 2024)





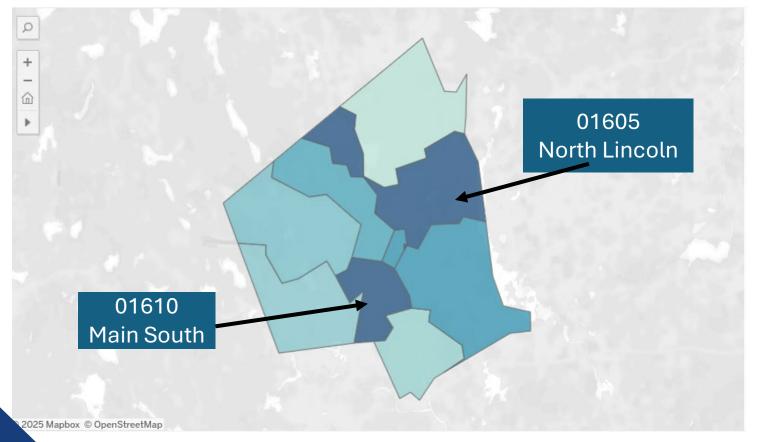
All Residential Eviction Cases, Non-Payment of Rent

View Cases by County and Zip Code

New Cases Filed	Plaintiffs	% Pro Se Plaintiffs	Defendants	% Pro Se Defendants
477	498	10.0%	748	97.9%

New Cases Filed by Location

Hover (and pause) over a location to filter data



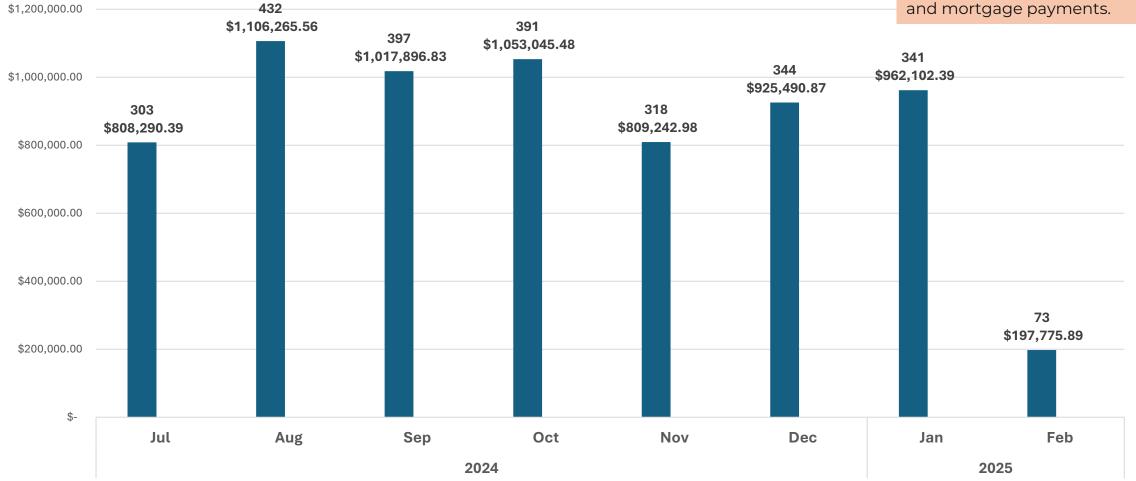


Throughout **2024** new eviction case filings per month at Worcester's Housing Court, remained at a level consistent with the number of evictions filed per month the year before.

Zip codes 01605 and 01610 had the most eviction filings in the City during Q4 2024.

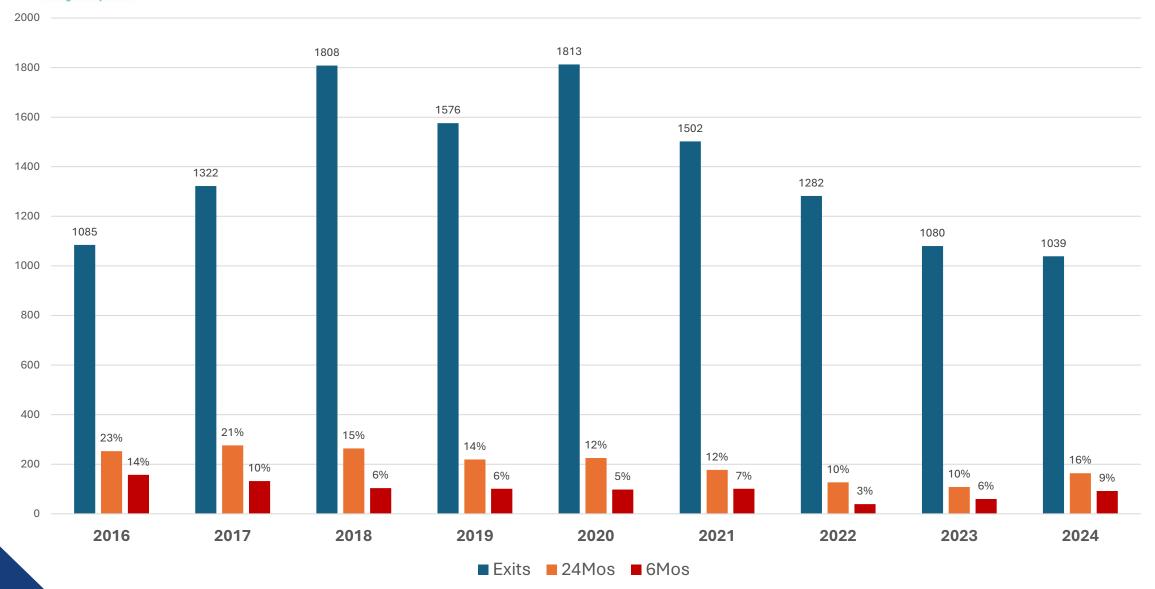


Residential Assistance for Families in Transition(RAFT) Number of households helped with amount disbursed per month. **RAFT** provides up to \$7,000 per 12-month period so that families/individuals can stay in their current home or move to a new one. Money may be used for rent, utilities, moving costs, and mortgage payments.





Returns to homelessness after a prior exit to permanent housing



Health Equity: How can we reduce health disparities?

- Public Health Approach: Utilize a community centered model.
- Outreach: We need to go to the neighborhoods and provide hospital care at home/in communities!
- Health Care Education: Increase health care messaging across all communities and age groups
- Social Determinants of Health: Incorporate these factors in the work
- Harm Reduction Strategies
- More Housing, shelters/beds
- Decrease Stigma

THANK YOU