

Summary of U.S. Census Bureau’s 2022 County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts Counties

Prepared by:

UMass Donahue Institute
Economic and Public Policy Research
Population Estimates Program

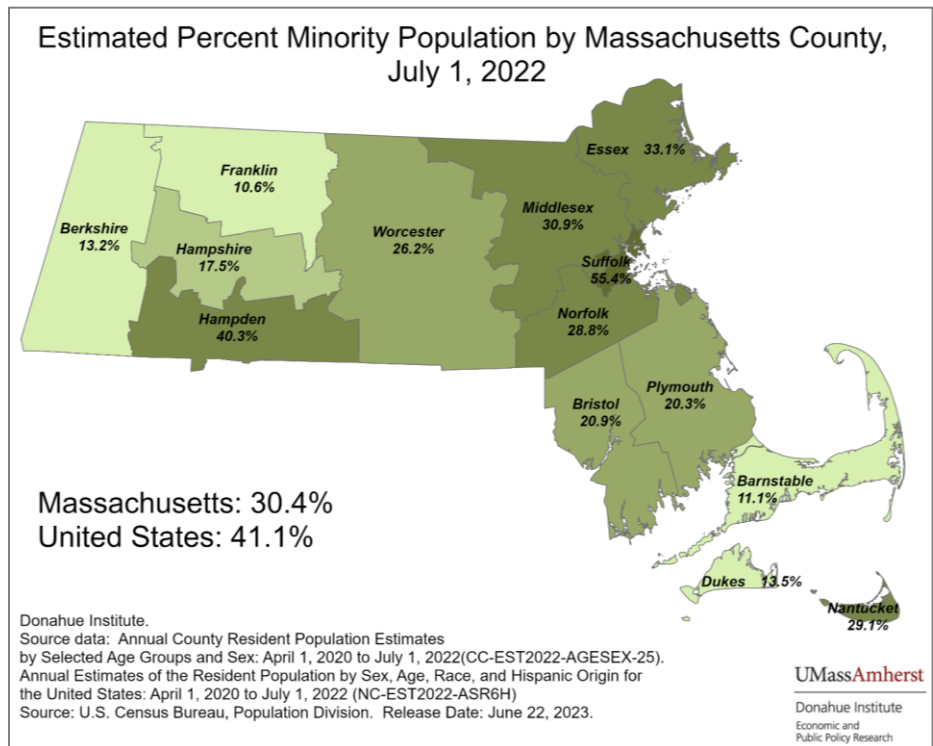
For Release August 8, 2023

Vintage 2022 County Characteristics Estimates

On June 22, 2023, the U.S. Census Bureau released its 2022 *State and County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and the United States*. These estimates break down the estimated 2022 county populations, released in March 2023, by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin.

- The official U.S. Census press release can be found at: <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/population-estimates-characteristics.html>
- The detailed population estimate tables can be found at: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/tables.html>

The Vintage 2022 estimates are developed from a “blended base” population that integrates data from the 2020 Census, Vintage 2020 estimates, and 2020 Demographic Analysis estimates.¹ The updated methodology was utilized by the U.S. Census Bureau to account for various challenges of the 2020 Census. These challenges include the limitations of the disclosure avoidance system applied to 2020 Census counts, the scheduling delays of census operations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing evaluation of 2020 Census data as a suitable base population for estimates. Read more about the Vintage 2022 methodology [here](#).



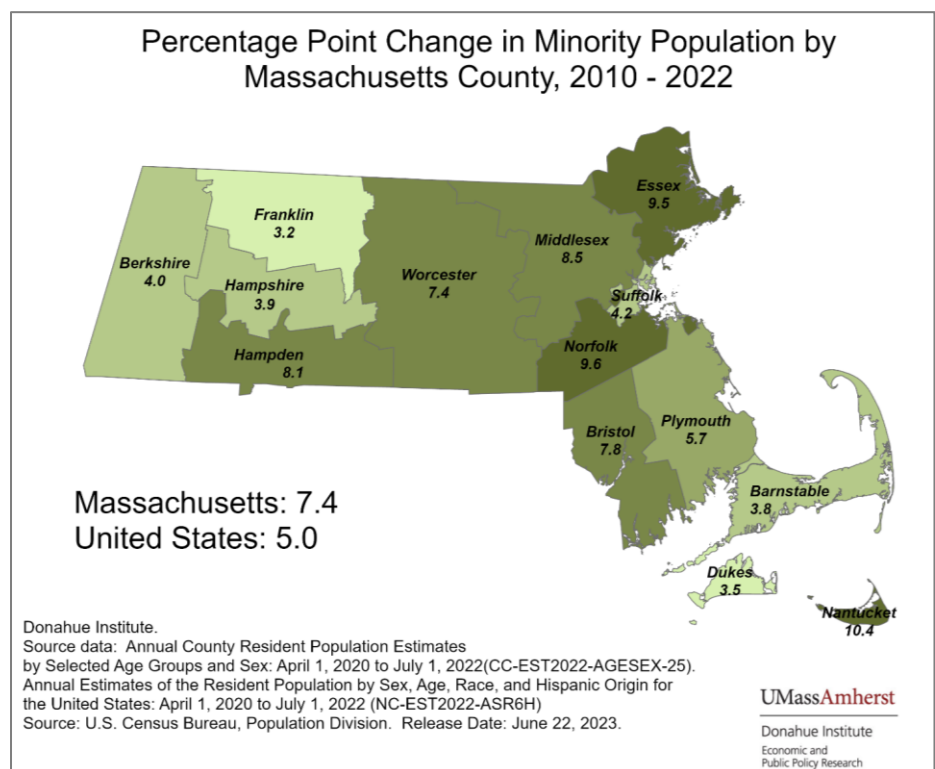
¹ “Methodology for the United States Population Estimates: Vintage 2022.” Census.gov, US Census Bureau, Dec. 2022. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/technical-documentation/methodology.html>

Race and Origin

Estimates for Massachusetts follow the national trend, showing a population that is growing older and more racially and ethnically diverse. Even though Massachusetts is less diverse than the U.S. average—with a combined ethnic and racial minorities population of just 30.4% compared to 41.1% in the U.S.²—the minority population in Massachusetts has been increasing at a faster rate than the U.S. average.³ From 2010 to 2022, the minority population in the state increased by 7.3 percentage points—from 23.1% to 30.4%—compared to a 5.0 percentage point increase in the U.S. overall. All Massachusetts counties have experienced increasing diversity since 2010 by varying degrees around the state.

The Massachusetts counties with the greatest percentage of combined ethnic and racial minorities populations in 2022 were Suffolk (55.4%), Hampden (40.3%), and Essex (33.1%). The counties with the lowest percentage were Franklin (10.6%), Barnstable (11.1%), and Berkshire (13.2%).

The largest increases of minority populations as a percentage of the total population since 2010 (by percentage point gain) were seen in Nantucket (10.4), Norfolk (9.6), and Essex County (9.5). Franklin (3.2), Dukes (3.5), and Barnstable County (3.8) showed the least amount of increase in minority population (Appendix B). These three counties are also three of the four “oldest” counties in the state – with the highest median ages – and Franklin is among the three counties in Massachusetts to have lost population since 2010 (alongside Berkshire and Hampden).



The counties with the highest estimated percentage of Hispanic (Latino/a/x) residents in Massachusetts in 2022 were Hampden (27.7%), Suffolk (23.9%), and Essex (23.9%); those with the smallest were Barnstable (3.7%), Dukes (3.7%), Plymouth (4.7%), and Franklin (4.9%). The total percentage of Hispanic population in Massachusetts in 2022 was 13.1% compared to 19.1% in the U.S. overall.

² Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022 (NC-EST2022-ASR6H). U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Released June 22, 2023

³ “Minority population” is defined for the purposes of this report as the combined Hispanic and non-White/non-Hispanic population.

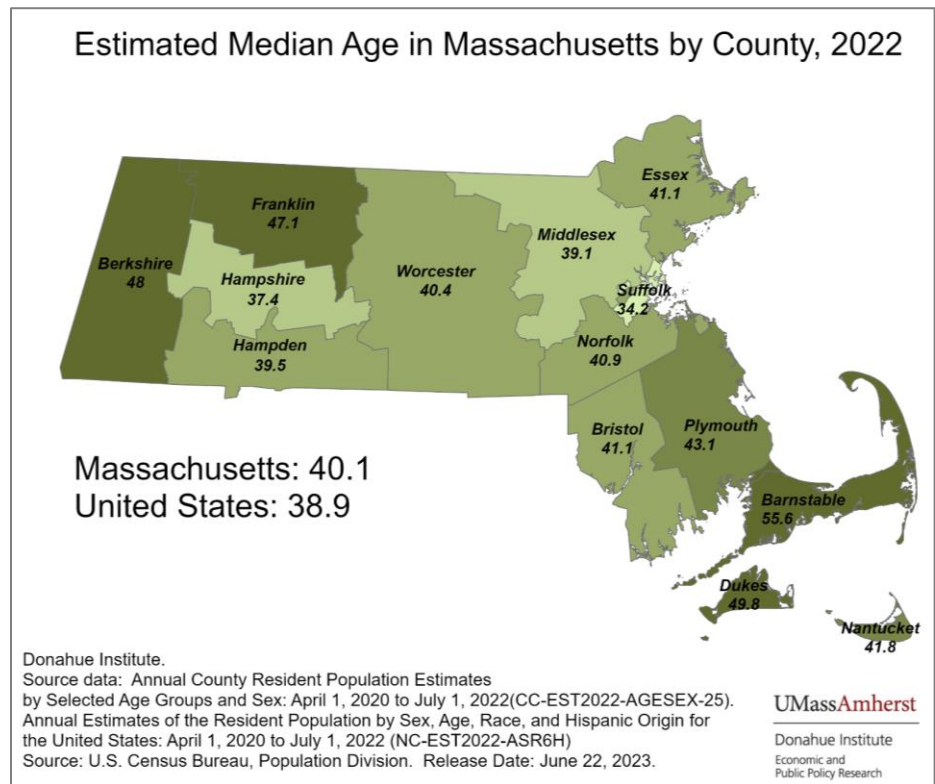
Population by Age

Massachusetts has an estimated median age of 40.1 years in 2022. As of 2022, 10 out of 14 Massachusetts counties—over two-thirds—have a median age 40 or over. The counties with the highest median age are Barnstable (55.6 years), Dukes (49.8 years), and Berkshire (48.0 years), while the counties with the youngest median ages are Suffolk (34.2 years), Hampshire (37.4 years), and Middlesex (39.1 years). See Appendix C to this report for additional detail.

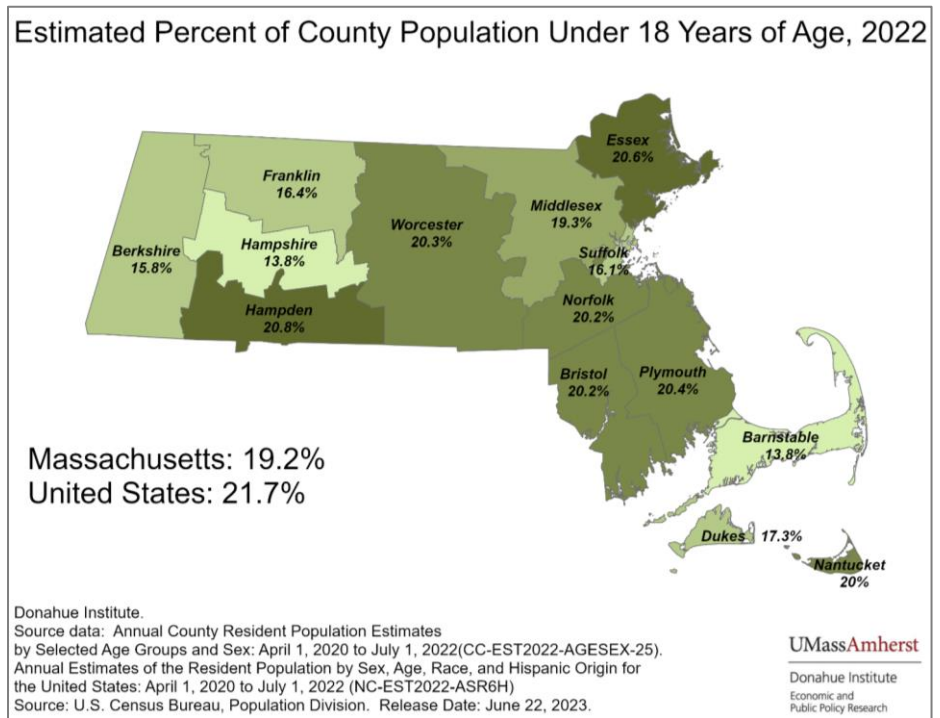
Since 2010, the median age in Massachusetts has increased

by 1.0 year on average across its 14 counties; however, some places are aging significantly faster than others. Barnstable County’s median age has increased by 5.7 years since 2010 while the median Norfolk County has increased by only 0.3 years over the same period.

It is not surprising that Barnstable, Dukes, and Berkshire County, given their high median ages, also have the highest percentages of population aged 65 and older in the state at 33.2%, 27.0%, and 25.5% respectively. Counties with the lowest percentages of persons 65 and older include Suffolk (13.5%), Middlesex (16.6%), and Nantucket (17.0%). Overall, Massachusetts has a higher percentage of population aged 65 and older (18.1%) than the U.S. as a whole (17.3%).



At the other end of the age-spectrum, counties with the highest percentage of children under 18 years of age include Hampden (20.8%), Essex (20.6%), Plymouth (20.4%), and Worcester (20.3%). Hampshire County is somewhat of an exception, with the second lowest median age in the state (37.4) but also the smallest percentage of children under 18 in the state (13.8%). In this case, a large percentage of college-aged students brings the median age down. Overall, Massachusetts has a smaller percentage of children under 18 (19.2%) than the U.S. (21.7%).



Trends in Aging

The aging population in Massachusetts, as with the U.S. as a whole, is reflected in the long-term population trends among age cohorts. Since 2000, the percentage of persons over 65 in Massachusetts counties has generally increased while the percentage of children under age five has decreased. The trend lines at right show how the percentages of these age groups have changed since 2000, by county. The highest points in the time series are represented by green dots and the lowest by red.

County	Under 5	65 And Over
Barnstable	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Berkshire	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Bristol	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Dukes	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Essex	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Franklin	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Hampden	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Hampshire	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Middlesex	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Nantucket	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Norfolk	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Plymouth	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Suffolk	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]
Worcester	[Line chart showing a downward trend from 2000 to 2022]	[Line chart showing an upward trend from 2000 to 2022]

When comparing the percentage of the Hispanic population by county against the median age by county, we see that Massachusetts follows the national trend where a higher percentage of Hispanic population generally relates to a lower median age. National estimates released by the Census Bureau in the V2022 series

show that the median age of the Hispanic population (30.7 years) is much lower than the median age of the non-Hispanic population (41.1 years) across the country.

In the Massachusetts county level V2022 estimates, we see that Barnstable and Dukes County are the two oldest in Massachusetts in terms of median age (55.6 and 49.8 years, respectively) and are the two counties with the lowest percentage of Hispanic population (3.7% and 3.7%). On the other hand, the “youngest” county, Suffolk (34.2 years), has the second highest percentage of Hispanic population in Massachusetts (23.9%), although the low median age is heavily influenced by the large college-aged population, as in Hampshire County. Hampden and Essex counties have large Hispanic populations (27.7% and 23.9%, respectively), and have median ages near that of the state average.

Additional Information

For more details on selected Massachusetts characteristics data and trends, please refer to the appendices to this document. You may also view the complete datasets by visiting the U.S. Census Bureau’s Estimates page at:

<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-counties-detail.html>

Attachments to this report include:

Appendix A1: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Race and Hispanic Origin for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and U.S. Totals, April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2022

Appendix A2: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Race and Hispanic Origin as a Percentage of the County Population in Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2022

Appendix B: Trends in Minority Population Growth in Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S.: Estimated Percentage of Non-Hispanic White Alone Population Compared to Minority Population by County, 2010-2022

Appendix C: Comparison of Selected Age Groups in Massachusetts Counties: Estimated Population and Percent of Population, 2022

Appendix D1: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Selected Age Groups for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., 2010-2022

Appendix D2: Trends in Selected Age Groups as a Percentage of Population for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., 2010-2022

Summary Prepared by:

Susan Strate

Christopher Diaz

Denis McAuliffe

Meghan Flanagan