

Summary of U.S. Census Bureau’s 2023 County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts Counties

Prepared by:

UMass Donahue Institute
Economic and Public Policy Research
Population Estimates Program

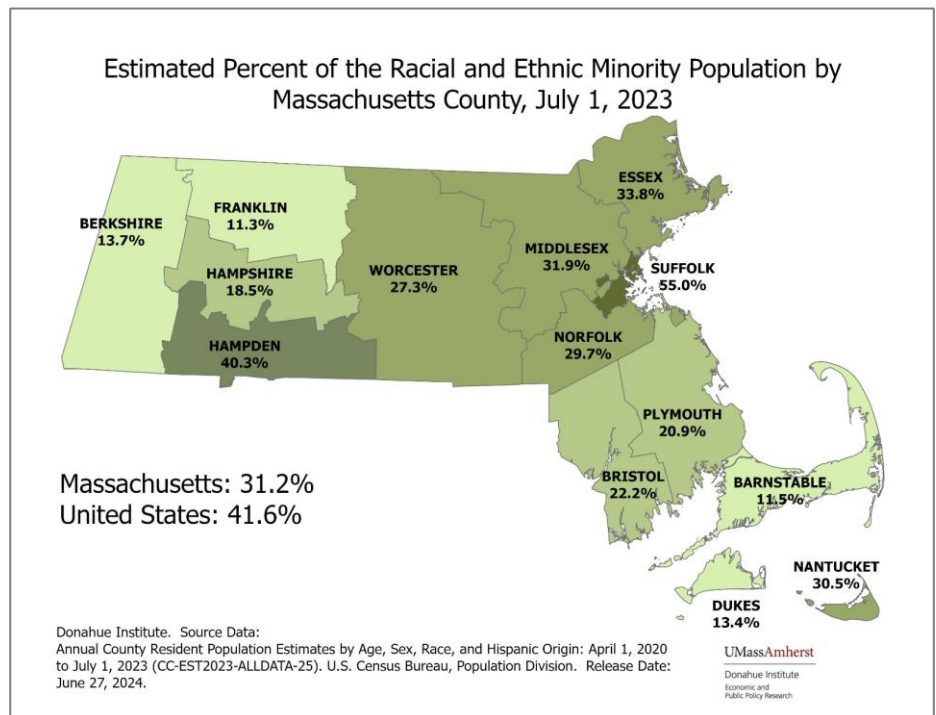
For Release August 5, 2024

Vintage 2023 County Characteristics Estimates

On June 27, 2024, the U.S. Census Bureau released its 2023 *State and County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and the United States*. These estimates break down the estimated 2023 county populations, released in March 2024, 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/2024/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 2023 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 2023 methodology [here](#).



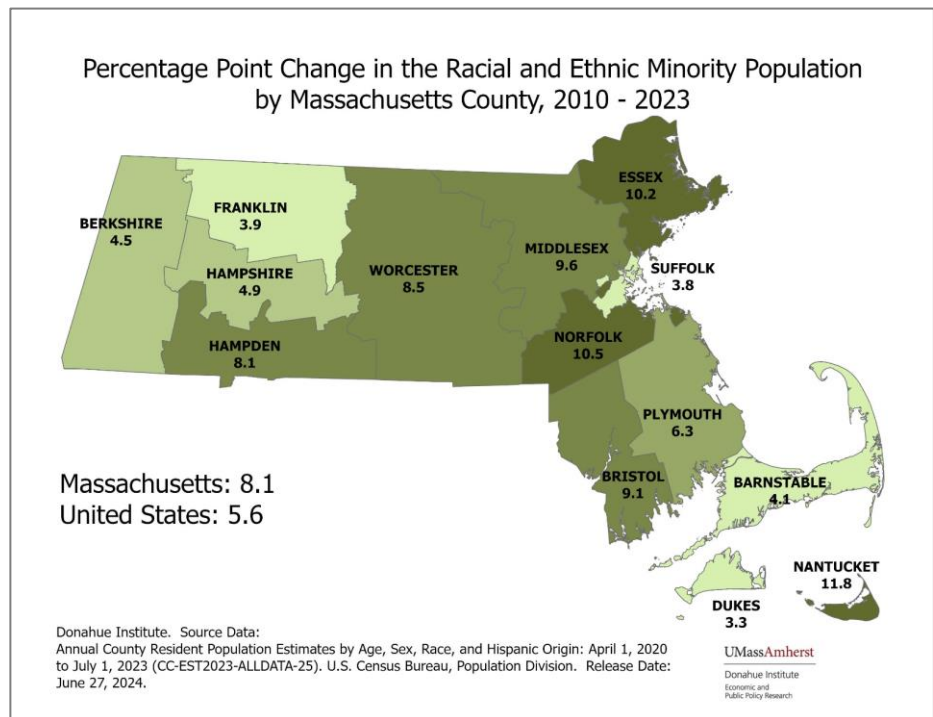
¹ [“Methodology for the United States Population Estimates: Vintage 2023.”](#) Census.gov, US Census Bureau, Dec. 2023.

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 racial and ethnic minority population of just 31.2% compared to 41.6% in the U.S.²—the state’s population has been increasing in diversity at a faster rate than the national average.³ From 2010 to 2023, the racial and ethnic minority population in Massachusetts increased by 8.1 percentage points—from 23.1% to 31.2%—compared to a 5.6 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 2023 were Suffolk (55.0%), Hampden (40.3%), and Essex (33.8%). The counties with the lowest percentage were Franklin (11.3%), Barnstable (11.5%), and Berkshire (13.7%).

The largest increases of racial and ethnic minority populations as a percentage of the total population since 2010 (by percentage point gain) were seen in Nantucket (11.8), Norfolk (10.5), and Essex County (10.2). Dukes (3.3), Suffolk (3.8), and Franklin County (3.9) showed the least amount of increase in diversity (Appendix B). Despite the racial and ethnic minority population in Suffolk County being the largest in the state, the percentage point change of this population has been relatively low when compared to other counties.



The counties with the highest estimated percentage of Hispanic (Latino/a/x) residents in Massachusetts in 2023 were Hampden (27.4%), Essex (24.5%), and Suffolk (23.4%); those with the smallest were Dukes (3.4%), Barnstable (3.8%), Plymouth (5.0%), and Franklin (5.5%). The total

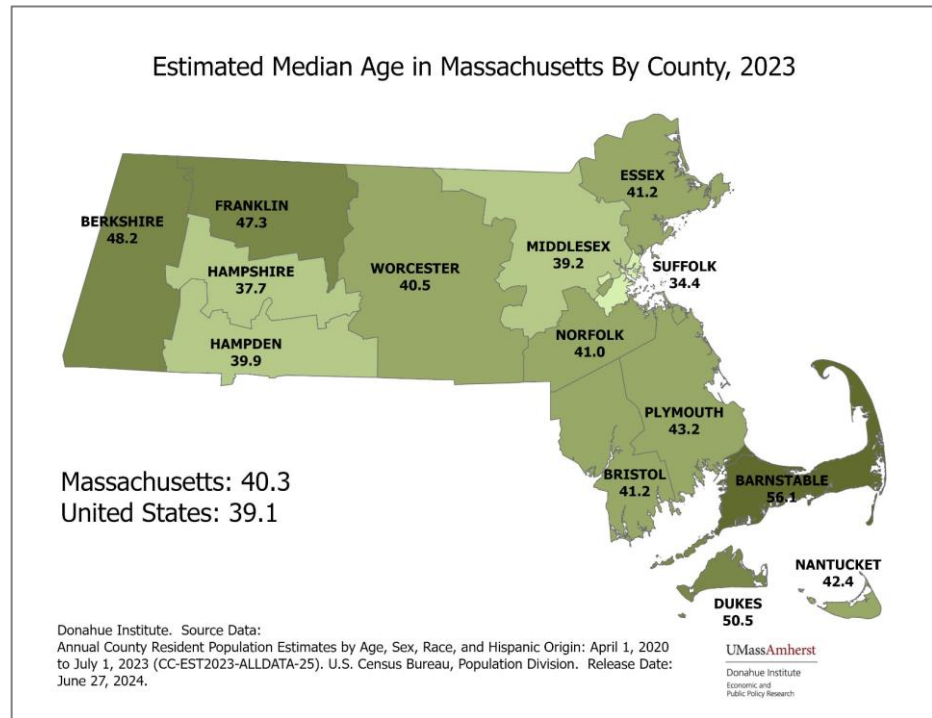
² Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023 (NC-EST2023-ASR6H). U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Released June 27, 2024

³ “Racial and ethnic minority population” is defined for the purpose of this report as the Hispanic population combined with the Not Hispanic and Black or African American alone population, the Not Hispanic and American Indian or Alaska Native alone population, the Not Hispanic and Asian alone population, the Not Hispanic and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone population, and the Not Hispanic and Two or more races population. These race and Hispanic origin categories are consistent with the population tabulations utilized by the U.S. Census Bureau.

percentage of Hispanic population in Massachusetts in 2023 was 13.5% compared to 19.5% in the U.S. overall.

Population by Age

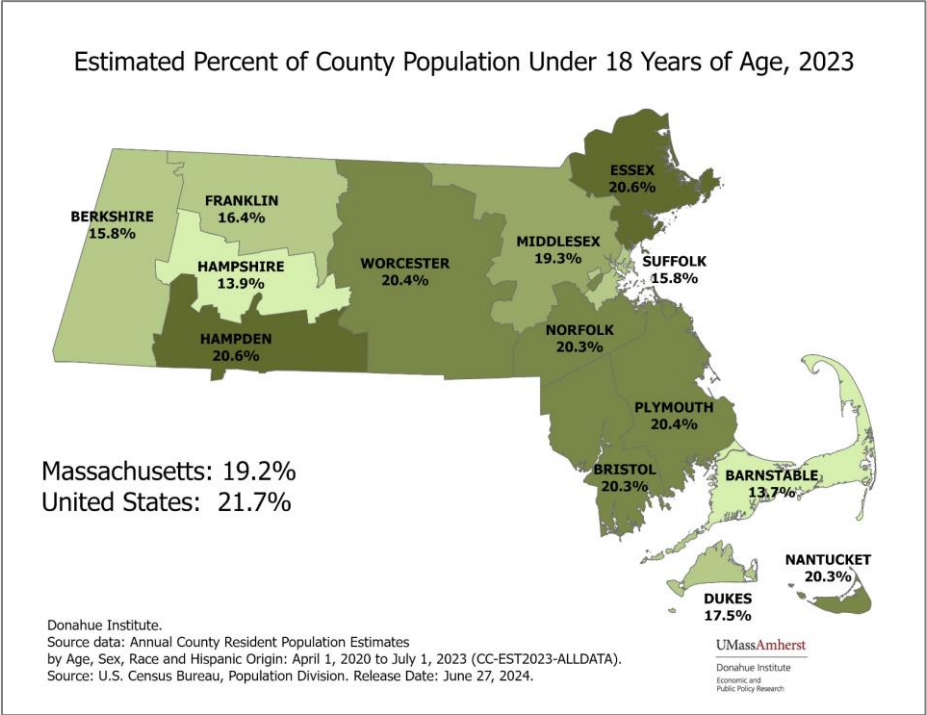
Massachusetts has an estimated median age of 40.3 years in 2023. As of 2023, 10 out of 14 Massachusetts counties—over two-thirds—have a median age 40 or over. The counties with the highest median age are Barnstable (56.1 years), Dukes (50.5 years), and Berkshire (48.2 years), while the counties with the youngest median ages are Suffolk (34.4 years), Hampshire (37.7 years), and Middlesex (39.2 years). See Appendix C to this report for additional detail.



Since 2010, the median age in Massachusetts has increased by 1.2 years on average across its 14 counties; however, some places are aging significantly faster than others. Barnstable County’s median age has increased by 6.2 years since 2010 while the median age in Norfolk County has increased by only 0.4 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 34.0%, 28.0%, and 26.2% respectively. Counties with the lowest percentages of persons 65 and older include Suffolk (13.9%), Middlesex (16.9%), and Nantucket (17.1%). Overall, Massachusetts has a higher percentage of population aged 65 and older (18.5%) than the U.S. as a whole (17.7%).

At the other end of the age-spectrum, counties with the highest percentage of children under 18 years of age include Essex (20.6%), Hampden (20.6%), Plymouth (20.4%), and Worcester (20.4%). Hampshire County is somewhat of an exception, with the second lowest median age in the state (37.7) but also the second lowest percentage of children under 18 in the state (13.9%). In this case, a large percentage of college-aged students lowers the median age. 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 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. In 2023, most counties in

| Population by Age Group Percentage, Trends 2000-2023 | | |
|--|---------|-------------|
| County | Under 5 | 65 And Over |
| Barnstable | | |
| Berkshire | | |
| Bristol | | |
| Dukes | | |
| Essex | | |
| Franklin | | |
| Hampden | | |
| Hampshire | | |
| Middlesex | | |
| Nantucket | | |
| Norfolk | | |
| Plymouth | | |
| Suffolk | | |
| Worcester | | |

Massachusetts have hit their highest percentages of population over 65 and their lowest percentages of population under five within the 23-year period displayed here.

Age by Ethnicity

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 V2023 series show that the median age of the Hispanic population (31.0 years) is much lower than the median age of the non-Hispanic population (41.3 years) across the country.

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, 2023

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, 2023

Appendix B: Trends in Racial and Ethnic Minority Population Growth in Massachusetts Counties: Estimated Percentage of the Not Hispanic, White Alone Population Compared to the Racial and Ethnic Minority Population 2010-2023

Appendix C: Comparison of Selected Age Groups in Massachusetts Counties: Estimated Population and Percent of Population, 2023

Appendix D1: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Selected Age Groups for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., 2010-2023

Appendix D2: Trends in Selected Age Groups as a Percentage of Population for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., 2010-2023

Summary Prepared by:

Susan Strate

Christopher Diaz

Denis McAuliffe

Matthew Schlaikjer