



BUREAU BRIEF SERIES ON WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS The Research Bureau

INSIGHTS INSIDER

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INTRODUCING WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS

WHAT IS THE WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS DASHBOARD?

Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Worcester Regional Research Bureau have released a new, interactive dashboard called Worcester County Insights. This community indicators platform offers comprehensive, data-driven insights into the critical issues shaping Worcester County, serving as a valuable resource for understanding and addressing multifaceted challenges across the region.

The dashboard's 60 indicators were decided through a collaborative effort that included leaders and experts from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, The City of Worcester's Department of Public Health, Clark University, and the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester. The dashboard was developed by the Center for Governmental Research (CGR).

Worcester County Insights offers a consolidated view of community indicators spanning seven categories: Community Life, Demographics & Diversity, Economic Mobility, Employment & Workforce, Health & Wellbeing, Youth & Education, and Racial Equity. **Data is provided for each of Worcester County's cities, towns, and census-designated areas, where applicable data exists.**

By distilling complex datasets into accessible visualizations, Worcester County Insights promotes informed decision-making for stakeholders to solve complex local and regional issues.

WHAT ARE THE DATA SOURCES?

The data powering Worcester County Insights is sourced from state and federal agencies, providing objective, accurate measures of community wellbeing. These sources include prominent federal databases such as the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many indicators draw from state

data sources such as the Massachusetts State Police, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Each indicator on the dashboard is backed by rigorous data collection methodologies, including best practices for estimation.

Community Life provides insights into community dynamics such as charitable contributions, voter registration and participation rates, and arrest rates by race and ethnicity. The indicators are sourced from the ACS, BLS, Mass Audubon, and Massachusetts State Police.

Demographics & Diversity indicators draw solely from the ACS, offering observations of the county's population composition as well as racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity trends in each city and town.

Economic Mobility indicators, also derived from ACS data, shed light on topics such as income inequality, educational attainment, housing and rent burdened individuals, and the salience of poverty, homelessness, and participation in public assistance programs.

Employment & Workforce metrics, sourced from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, BLS, and ACS, enable analysis of workforce dynamics, such as the change in employment and average salary by sector, employer size, and the female-to-male earnings ratio.

Health & Wellbeing provides insights into public health outcomes and challenges across the region, leveraging data from the CDC, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and other trusted sources. Key indicators include rates of infant mortality, opioid overdose mortality, asthma, diabetes, and cancer.

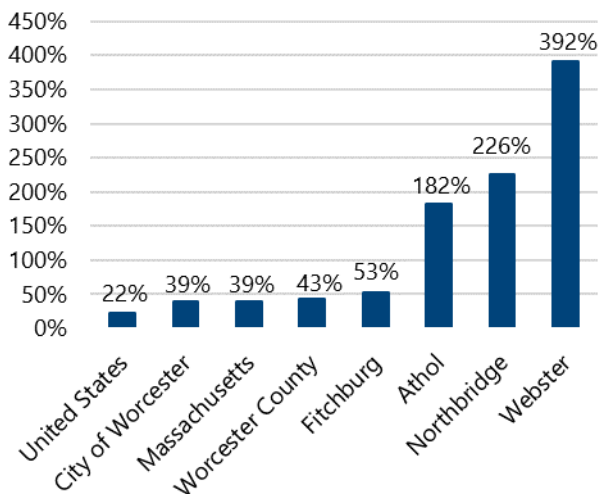
Youth & Education examines educational attainment, student MCAS performance, and youth outcomes such as poverty by race and ethnicity, sourced from the ACS and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Racial Equity consolidates data across the six preceding

categories, selecting those with breakdowns by race and ethnicity. This streamlined view empowers stakeholders to examine and comprehend disparities, enabling them to refine their strategies to bridge gaps and achieve equitable outcomes in their missions.

As an example, Table 1 shows the municipalities in Worcester County with the fastest-growing Hispanic population between 2018 and 2022. It is important to note that this measure reflects the change in the percentage of Hispanic residents in each area, not the nominal increase in residents or previous percentage changes. For example, the City of Worcester, which boasts one of the highest percentages of Hispanic residents in the region, experienced relatively less growth over this period compared to other areas.

Table 1: Change in Hispanic Population, 2018-2022



Source: Worcester County Insights Dashboard, 2024

WHAT VALUE DOES WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS OFFER FOR THE COMMUNITY?

Community development and social advocacy organizations can utilize the dashboard to identify areas of concern, mobilize resources, and advocate for positive change. Worcester County Insights equips **Businesses** with crucial insights for strategic decision-making, market targeting, resource optimization, and talent acquisition, aligning with community needs. **Nonprofit organizations** and other entities engaged in grant development and evaluation may leverage Worcester County Insights to showcase the necessity for targeted proposed projects or broad regional investments. The dashboard creates a benchmark for data-driven arguments to enhance the region’s ability to garner more resources from both private and public sources. Worcester County Insights also provides **higher education institutions** with valuable data for research, community engagement, and program alignment. Colleges and universities can use it to identify local socio-economic trends, create service-learning opportunities,

and forge partnerships with community organizations to achieve shared goals. By leveraging these insights, academic institutions can better prepare students for the workforce while contributing to the region’s development. **Elected officials and policymakers on the local and state levels** should leverage the dashboard for data-driven policy analysis. Government agencies can use this data to ensure that targeted interventions are allocated to areas with the greatest need and potential for improvement.

WHAT ARE SOME USEFUL FEATURES FROM WORCESTER COUNTY INSIGHTS?

Once selecting an indicator, **users may customize charts to fit their needs.** Clicking on a municipality in the x-axis of an indicator’s bar chart will reveal or omit the data for that area. Each chart includes data from ten communities in Worcester County: Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Northbridge, Southbridge, Spencer, Webster, Westborough, and Worcester. Values for Worcester County, Massachusetts, and the United States are also provided for comparative analysis. **Users can also view maps of selected indicators for each municipality throughout Worcester County.**

Map 1 shows poverty levels across Worcester County municipalities using a white-to-dark blue color scale. Clicking on a municipality reveals its poverty level.

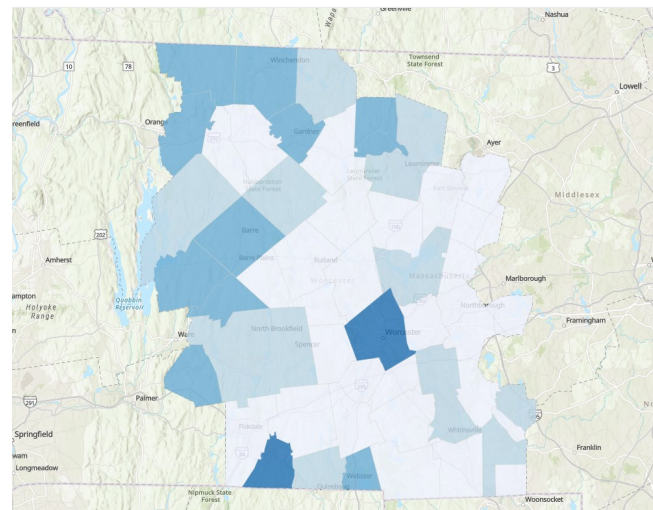
Legend

Worcester County Localities (2018-22)

Percent of People Living in Poverty

- > 14.9% - 19.4%
- > 10.4% - 14.9%
- > 5.8% - 10.4%
- 1.3% - 5.8%

Map 1: People Living in Poverty in 2022



Source: Worcester County Insights Dashboard, 2024

Worcester County Insights’ convenient, at-a-glance overview is a tool to identify areas of growth and decline, and where. To learn more about your area, and delve deeper into the interactive charts and maps, please visit worcestercountyinsights.org.