



Somerville Human Rights Commission

Annual Report

July 2025 - June 2026

***Somerville Human Rights: A Strong Foundation
with Remaining Gaps Across Communities***



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Executive Summary

The Somerville Human Rights Commission (HRC) is a semi-autonomous body appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council. The HRC spent FY2026 building its operational foundation while beginning to define a clearer role in protecting and promoting human rights across the city. After filling several open seats and reaching quorum in 2025, the Commission focused on internal infrastructure, community engagement, and early programming that would support more sustained and effective work in future years.

As part of the revitalization of the Commission this year, we spent some time reviewing the duties of the HRC defined in the Somerville City Ordinance. These duties, as defined in [Section 2-243 \(11\)](#), include:

- “To publish an annual report of the state of human rights in the city drawn from its own resources as well as records of other city departments.
- “To render to the mayor and the city council a full written report of its activities and its recommendations, not less than once per year.”

This report fulfills this mandate.

We begin this report with some **background on the UN Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR), its relationship to law and policy, and what that means for **the role of Human Rights at a local level. This is the focus of Part I. Part II delves into some detail about the Somerville Human Rights Commission** itself, including the basis of its existence in the Somerville City Ordinance, and the functions it fulfills.

The substance of the report is contained in Part III, which is structured around the priority areas we selected for our work in FY26: **Immigrant Rights and Basic Needs, including Income and Poverty, Housing and Homelessness, and Healthcare**. Each of these priority areas has a dedicated section explaining what we have learned about how Somerville’s residents fare for each category, and what gaps might need greater attention.

Our research shows that **Somerville remains a city with many strengths**, including a diverse population, strong civic institutions, and relatively high levels of education, employment, and health coverage. **Nevertheless, there are disparities, with the same neighborhoods surfacing repeatedly as areas with higher rates of poverty and health inequities**. These neighborhoods : East Somerville, West Somerville and Winter Hill, also

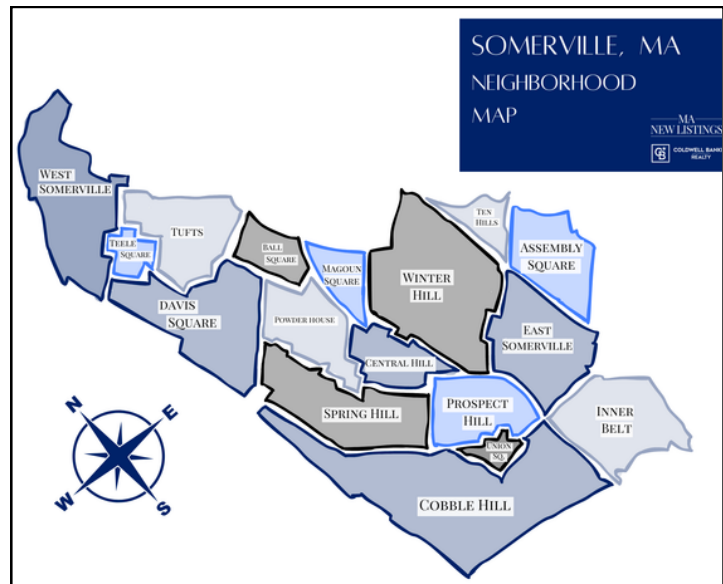


have larger Black/African and Hispanic/Latino populations, and should be given particular consideration by city and non-governmental agencies looking to improve the life of Somerville residents.

We also found that **poverty disproportionately affects women, female-headed households and the elderly in Somerville**; this aligns with poverty research across the country and the world. We strongly encourage policy interventions tailored to meet the needs of these groups.

As part of our analysis, we noted that our priority areas : **Immigrant Rights and Basic Needs, are affected by policies at the State and Federal levels.**

This has been most evident with ICE activity in Somerville, but like other agencies, we are monitoring potential cuts to social programs and medicaid benefits¹ that are so critical to meeting the needs of struggling members of our community. We also note that the **increased rates of poverty, food insecurity and homelessness are problems that have ripple effects**, as the conflicts over the unhoused population in Davis Square have shown. It's in everyone's best interest to think strategically about these questions.



The priority areas we chose for this year touch only a small part of the rights covered in the Human Rights Framework, but hope that this serves as a stepping stone as we continue shaping the role of the HRC. As we continue our work, **the Commission hopes to serve as a convener, advocate, and accountability body for residents whose rights are most at risk.**

HRC Commissioners

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Part I: Background & Introduction

The Human Rights Framework

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, was the result of the experience of the Second World War. With the end of that war, and the creation of the United Nations, the international community vowed to never again allow atrocities like those of that conflict to happen again. The UDHR was a complement to the UN Charter, establishing a road map to guarantee the rights of every individual everywhere. The UDHR has been translated into over [500 languages](#). It's widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels, all containing references to it in their preambles.²

The UDHR includes thirty articles. Of these the first two articles state foundational principles of freedom and equality in dignity and access to human rights. The thirtieth article protects human rights from being destroyed by any person, group or state. The remainder can be categorized as follows:

Civil Rights - Articles 3-18 of the UDHR protect the individual's right to life, liberty, and equality. This includes protections against slavery and torture, the right to recognition before the law, and the right to privacy.

Political Rights - Articles 19-21 of the UDHR guarantee freedoms such as thought, conscience, and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to peaceful assembly, and the right to participate in government through free elections

Economic Rights - Articles 22-25 of the UDHR cover the right to work, fair and safe working conditions, equal pay for equal work, and the right to form or join trade unions.

Social & Cultural Rights - Articles 26-29 outline the right to an adequate standard of living (including food, clothing, housing, and medical care) and the right to social security during times of unemployment, sickness, or old age. In addition, these articles ensure the right to education and the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community





A regional international treaty, called the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) or the Pact of San Jose, was adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1969, reaffirming the aims of the UDHR, and acknowledging the relationship between individual duties and individual rights.

Local Application of Human Rights

Due to its moral-ethical and international nature, The Human Rights framework is an established tool that goes beyond party politics and transcends any particular city administration. The Declaration of Human Rights verbalizes the basic values that should be the north star for how nations, states and municipalities treat their citizens and residents. Given this context, a local Human Rights Commission can serve as an organ for monitoring how well a city is enabling and promoting Human Rights. It may weigh in on specific policies and events, and can collaborate with residents as well as governmental and non-governmental bodies to ensure that human rights are protected.

Human Rights, Law and Policy

We recognize that Human Rights are enabled by law and policy at the local, state, national and international levels, and we strive to partner with all actors that implement, defend or enable such laws and policies. We hope to channel the conscience of our community when the letter of the law or its implementation doesn't meet the spirit of the Human Rights framework.





About this Report

We undertook this report as an opportunity to research, document and align on the state of Human Rights in Somerville. Despite our commitment to this work and our highest aspirations for its impact, we acknowledge the many limitations of this effort. As a volunteer body we were limited by time, as well as the restrictions on how we could spend our annual budget. For example, we were advised that our budget cannot be used to hire staff, and that we cannot engage additional volunteers to carry out our core responsibilities. We have therefore relied on publicly available data sources, and guidance from partner organizations in completing this effort.

The primary contributors to this report were Elyse Best, Jenny Bonham-Carter, Salma Kazmi and Brian Sokol. The report was reviewed and approved by a quorum of HRC members on July 8, 2026.

We are grateful to the Somerville Homeless Coalition, the MIRA Coalition, The Somerville Food Coalition, the Somerville Department of Racial and Social Justice, The Somerville Office for Immigrant Affairs, the Somerville Office for Housing Stability and Victoria Decker, expert on affordable housing, who have supported us through advice, data and other resources as we assembled this report.

We recognize that there are many communities and areas of Human Rights that we have not been able to prioritize this year. We affirm our commitment to all the rights enshrined in the UDHR, and we hope that by selecting our priorities based on community surveys and focus groups we have directed our energies in ways that were most useful for the residents we serve.





Part II: The Somerville Human Rights Commission

The Somerville Human Rights Commission (HRC) was established by [City Ordinance](#) in 1993 to ensure that the human rights of its residents are met, and to broadly promote human rights across the city. [Section 2-242](#) of the City Ordinance outlines four key functions of the HRC, namely:

1. Collaborate with community groups in offering **educational programs and campaigns** to increase mutual self-respect, harmonious intergroup relations, and the peaceful enjoyment of life in our diverse community.
2. **Respond to complaints** by persons in the city who believe that their human or civil rights, as defined by existing local, state and federal law, have been violated in Somerville.
3. **Initiate investigations** into circumstances which appear to the commission to unlawfully discriminate against any of the people of the city.
4. **Increase compliance with appropriate local, state and federal laws** and to raise the level of awareness and sensitivity to human rights issues in municipal business



Commissioners serve as volunteers and are considered “[special municipal employees](#)” of the City. This quasi-formal positioning allows us to partner with city agencies, particularly the Department of Racial and Social Justice (RSJ)³, but also situates us somewhat outside the formal structures of city government. We believe this is a strength, allowing us to both



support residents, but also to identify areas where the city itself may have opportunities to improve.

After several years of limited membership, the Commission filled enough open seats in 2025 to reach quorum. By all measures, we are a diverse group, representing a mix of ethnicities, nations of origin, immigration statuses, disability statuses, sexual orientations, genders and gender identities and religions. We have built on this strong foundation to start navigating how to best serve the city and community. Given the changes in membership and the history of low participation, FY2026 has been focused on establishing some foundational structures to enable long-term impact.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

We find ourselves reviving the HRC at a challenging time for Human Rights. In recent months, national and international upheavals have had and will continue to have local repercussions. The HRC seeks to keep an eye on these broader trends, while identifying ways that global and national factors impact Somerville residents; we hope to identify ways to make an impact within our sphere of influence. We recognize that the challenges we face can be daunting, and in moments when direct action is limited, we remain committed to openly naming injustices as a necessary first step toward accountability and a more just future. We also actively seek partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals to strengthen our collective impact.

Operational and Institutional Framework

The Somerville Human Rights Commission works closely with the City of Somerville through the Department of Racial and Social Justice, as well as with other Commissions such as the

Somerville Commission on Women and the Somerville Commission on Persons with Disabilities. We have also been in dialogue with the Office of Mayor Jake Wilson, the City Solicitor's Office and the Office of the City Clerk.

The laws and policies that secure Human Rights for the residents of Somerville include those that are enacted by the City Council, the Massachusetts State Legislature and by the Federal Government. They are also implemented through numerous bodies such as the Somerville





Office for Immigrant Affairs, the Somerville Office for Housing Stability, the Attorney General's Office and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. The HRC collaborates with these and similar agencies, as well as nonprofits, community groups and individuals of conscience to carry out our work.

We are also a member of the Massachusetts Coalition of Human Rights Commissions that has helped our commissioners establish a network of practitioners around the state for discussion, resources and advice.

HRC Activities in FY2026

Setting Up Infrastructure

In the months prior to and during the fiscal year starting July 2025, we have been building our internal infrastructure while initiating programming. This infrastructure includes a mission statement and community agreements for our internal collaboration, as well as an onboarding processes and materials for new commissioners, subcommittee structures and basic communication infrastructure. We are now beginning work on bylaws and the structure for a future Advisory Council. We also hope to build better mechanisms for connecting and engaging with Somerville residents, which are sorely lacking today.

Given that we are re-initiating the work of the HRC after a period of dormancy, the development of these basic resources has required significant investment in time and energy. Some of this work is still ongoing as we approach the end of the fiscal year on June 30, 2026.



Fulfilling our Mandate

As outlined above, the HRC is charged with four key functions according to [Section 2-242](#) of the City Ordinance. We have taken preliminary steps to fulfill these functions as described below.



Educational Programs

In collaboration with the Department of Racial and Social Justice, the HRC sponsored an [essay contest](#) and participated in an event at Somerville High School to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Junior. We also held a [Wage Theft Training](#) in collaboration with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office to help people in Somerville understand their rights with respect to fair pay. Finally, our commissioners are participating in an interfaith coalition in collaboration with faith communities across Somerville to better ensure that the needs of our community members are met.



Complaints Response

The HRC is eager to respond to Human Rights violations filed by Somerville residents. After some research, we have learned that rights violations are filed with at least three departments: the [Somerville Police Department](#), the [Department of Fair Housing](#), and the [Department of Racial and Social Justice](#) (RSJ) which accepts both complaints related to Hate and Bias as well as those related to ADA violations. We believe that the Hate and Bias complaints filed with the RSJ most clearly overlap with the mandate of the HRC and we began seeking access to this data starting in November, 2025. Gaining access to these historic records proven more challenging than anticipated. After multiple direct requests to the RSJ, we filed a public records request for complaints data and related investigative materials and correspondence covering calendar years 2024, 2025 and 2026. As of June 18, 2026, we have received some but not all of this data. We have initiated a review and analysis of data received, but are not able to fully comment on it in this document due to the delays in gaining access. We plan to use the complaints data to inform our priorities for 2026. We are working in parallel to develop a complaints investigation process taking into consideration best practices from other local Human Rights Commissions, while prioritizing documentation, transparency and tracking. In one instance, a member of the HRC was contacted directly regarding a verbal assault on the grounds of Somerville High School; the HRC filed that complaint through the RSJ website, but when the complainant hadn't been contacted after sixty days, we took direct action to respond via public statement.



Investigations

The City Ordinance suggests that the role of the HRC is to investigate other circumstances which appear to the commission to unlawfully discriminate against any of the people of the city. We expect that our investigation process, mentioned in #2 above and currently under development, will be structured to enable investigation of circumstances that may not be captured in a formal complaint.

Increasing Compliance

The Wage Theft Training held by the HRC on April 15th fulfills this function of the HRC, however we have significantly more work to do to operationalize this part of our mandate.

The HRC Mission and Priorities

In October 2025, we adopted the following mission statement to guide our work:



The Human Rights Commission shall protect the constitutional, civil, and human rights of all people in Somerville. We shall strive to end discrimination and promote universal access to basic needs, improved quality of life, mutual understanding, and elevated public discourse.



This mission is broad, and the Human Rights Commission has limited resources. Thus we identified key priorities to focus our efforts. Through focus groups, an online survey, and the personal experiences and networks of the commissioners, the Human Rights Commissioners identified two major priority areas:

- Immigrant rights and aggressive ICE tactics
- Equitable access to basic human needs

These priorities fit under the category of Economic, Cultural and Social rights protected by the UDHR, which are elaborated under several articles. Particularly relevant to the priorities of the HRC are Article 22 (Right to Social Security), Article 23 (Right to Work), Article 25 (Right to Adequate Standard of Living) and Article 28 (Right to a Free and Fair World).

It's worth noting that the HRC's priorities of Immigrant Rights and Access to Basic Needs also intersect. For example, some immigrants have expressed fear of engaging with human service providers to fulfill basic needs, for fear of being arrested by ICE. Similarly, some workers may be deterred from reporting wage theft violations out of fear of employer retribution through the immigration processes. In addition, the Trump Administration has threatened to withhold Federal funding to sanctuary cities, including funding that supports basic human needs, such as Food Stamps. In February 2025, [Somerville and Chelsea sued](#) the Administration over this policy. As of May 2026, this complaint ([Case 1:25-cv-10442-NMG](#)) is still in the courts.

The remainder of this report focuses on the status of human rights in Somerville with respect to these two priority areas, including overview of each issue, its local impact; existing efforts, partnerships, and opportunities for HRC engagement and intervention.



Part III: Human Rights in Somerville

Demographic and Social Context of Somerville

According to the US Census, Somerville is a city comprised of relatively young (30.9 yo average), well-educated residents (73.8% B.A. or higher) who benefit from high rates of employment (79.5%) and high rates of health insurance coverage (97.4%) as compared to state and national averages. The median household income in Somerville also significantly surpasses that of Massachusetts and the nation. Our poverty rates (8.6%) and disability rates (7.8%) are also lower than the national average.

The city's diversity is reflected in its racial makeup, which is not far off from national averages with a slightly higher than average mix of foreign-born residents.

While we recognize that census data may be flawed due to lower participation by immigrants, people of color and other marginalized communities, we have taken this as a starting point to provide some insights into the city's makeup.

30.9

Average Age

73.8%

B.A. Degree or Higher

79.5%

Employed

97.4%

Insured



Immigrant Rights

While the media has focused on ICE "raids," these are just one visible part of a broader collection of aggressive immigration enforcement tactics that have increased under the current administration. A raid is a coordinated, unannounced operation to locate, detain, and deport undocumented immigrants, but there are other ICE activities that instill fear, such as repeated presence at certain locations, enlisting other enforcement bodies, conducting audits on businesses through the labor department, and other quiet activities used detain and deport that take place under the radar of mainstream media.

Somerville has become a focal point for immigrant detentions, in September 2025, city officials verified that more than 30 people have been detained in the area since January.

Somerville has been a self-declared sanctuary city since 1987, as reaffirmed in 2016, 2019 and 2024.

Since last December, The City of Somerville has conducted more than 200 know-your-rights trainings and handed out more than 5,000 cards summarizing what immigrants can do and what rights they have in ICE interactions (numbers from June, 2026)



"People are hiding – anybody who's concerned is staying at home. They're being quiet. People are afraid," said Councilor Matt McLaughlin in an interview with WGBH, noting that some immigrant-owned businesses are shutting down. McLaughlin said arrests in East Somerville are up because it is the densest part of the city. "It's very easy to just go around and just pick people up at random," he said.



Heightened immigration enforcement actions under the second Trump administration have rightly received significant media coverage and are among President Trump's most contentious policies. The administration has tripled the budget for the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and has increased funding for detention and removal operations and **set aside about \$45B for new detention centers. Detention numbers have climbed to record highs with the daily detained population reaching more than 73,400 in mid-January 2026** and federal planning documents pointing to capacity for roughly 92,600 beds. **Deportations have also increased, with analysts estimating about 310,000 to 315,000 removals in 2025.**⁴



As in the nation overall, ICE arrests have risen sharply in Massachusetts. **WBUR reported more than 7,030 ICE arrests in the state in the first 15 months of the Trump administration**, nearly five times the 1,470 arrests in the final 415 days of the Biden administration. The same reporting found that **nearly half of those arrested had no criminal record or pending criminal charges**, and that arrests took place in courthouses, police departments, and streets across the state. The Massachusetts Trial Court also reported 726 ICE arrests from January 2025 through February 2026, underscoring how heavily courthouses have become a flashpoint⁵.

Following a recent [Supreme Court ruling](#), the Trump Administration has also begun to revoke Temporary Protected Status (TPS), a program that allows thousands of Massachusetts residents to live and work here legally. TPS is aimed at shielding people from countries facing “armed conflict, environmental disaster or other extraordinary circumstances” from deportation. Immigrants from Haiti and Syria are the first to be affected, putting more than 10,000 people at risk in the state.

Revoking TPS will not only wreak havoc on the lives of local immigrants, it will also have ripple effects on Somerville’s workforce and care networks. Haitian community members play essential roles in supporting older adults, people with disabilities, families, and other vulnerable residents. The loss of these community members will have broader impact on systems of care and support that many Somerville households rely on.

Somerville’s History of Protecting Immigrant Rights

Somerville has been a [Sanctuary City](#) since 1987. The resolution establishing this status was adopted stating that all people in Somerville should be afforded “all the rights and privileges offered and supplied to all people residing or working in the City.” The resolution goes on to say that “no City Employee or Department will make the provision of Somerville services or benefits conditional upon immigration status unless required to do so by Statute, federal regulation or court decisions.

The initial resolution was revised in 1988 and renewed as an Equal Opportunity Resolution in 1993 and rights of immigrants in Somerville were further reaffirmed in





2016. In 2019 Somerville further codified itself as a “Welcoming Community.” The City Council reaffirmed its Welcoming Community status again in 2024⁶. Under these ordinances it does not participate in or interfere with federal civil immigration enforcement.

As part of its commitment to defending the rights of immigrants, Somerville also established the Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA) in 2013 and has invested considerably over the years in this division. In 2020, it established a legal services program to provide universal legal representation to immigrants who 1) live or work in Somerville, 2) make at or under 80% AMI, and 3) are at risk of deportation. Somerville's model of legal representation is nationally distinctive in that it aims to cover the entirety of an individual's case regardless of how many years the case takes to complete.

Protecting Immigrant Rights at the Federal, State and Local Levels

Response to the Trump administration’s policies are taking place at all levels of government.

The Dignity Act introduced in Congress would provide a path to citizenship for Dreamers and other undocumented individuals, address visa backlogs, and reshape our asylum system, among other things⁷.

The most visible Massachusetts proposal is the PROTECT Act, a broad package backed by the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus. Reporting on the bill says it would bar warrantless civil immigration arrests in courthouses, restrict local law enforcement from asking about immigration status, and block new agreements that let local authorities enforce federal immigration law⁸.



As of June, 2026, the Massachusetts State House and Senate have both passed the PROTECT Act and have appointed conferees to negotiate its final version (H.5316/S.3086). Most of the conferees have been closely involved in developing their respective versions of the bill.



Another immigration-related Massachusetts bill in the current session is S.1127, which focuses on access to legal representation in immigration proceedings.

Finally, Governor Healey signed Executive Order 650 on January 29, 2026, which limits state cooperation with immigration enforcement. These are all positive signals with respect to local and state level support for immigrant rights.

Grassroots Activism

In September, 2025, The Boston Globe published an [article](#) about some of the “extraordinary steps” people have been taking to respond to ICE detentions. The article highlights actions taken by City Councilor J.T. Scott as well as city residents and SOIA to monitor, record and warn people about ICE activity, and to track down detained people when possible, providing them with legal and other resources. It highlights the creativity required to get information and provide support when dealing with an agency that seems to be deliberately opaque and difficult to navigate.

Tracking and Reporting Immigrant Detentions

The MIRA Coalition and other local advocacy groups have been working with partners such as the [Deportation Data Project](#) and the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse ([TRAC](#)) and the [Deportation Tracker](#) to gather data regarding ICE detentions and deportations, document the scope and impact of deportation operations and empower immigrant communities and allies with knowledge and resources.

The MIRA coalition has also launched a project to collect stories and photos of people abducted by ICE. Those who are interested in sharing their own story, or that of someone they know, can find more information at <https://www.takenbyice.com/>.

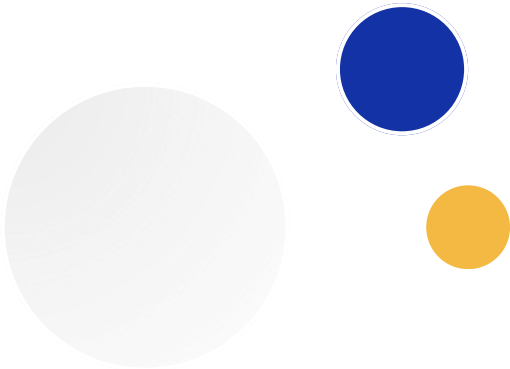




Legal Support for Detained persons

The Trump Administration has made access to legal pathways for immigrants increasingly more challenging. One of the ways it has done so is by increasing the cost of application fees. In response to this in 2026, the Somerville Educators Union (SEU) partnered with The Welcome Project to create an [Immigrant Fee Support Fund](#). The fund covers immigration fees for Somerville residents even when the residents have their own attorney or are attempting to represent themselves.

SOIA also works with [Greater Boston Legal Services](#) (GBLS) to help immigrants who have been detained. Legal help can also be obtained from [The Right to Immigration Institute](#) and the [PAIR Project](#).





Equitable Access to Basic Needs

There are many aspects of basic human needs, including air, water, food, shelter/housing, healthcare, clothing, bathroom access, transportation and mobility, physical safety, environmental quality, reproductive freedom, heat and cooling. For purposes of this report, we've chosen to focus on three sub-areas of basic needs: Income and poverty; housing and homelessness; and health, mental health, and health equity.



Income and Poverty

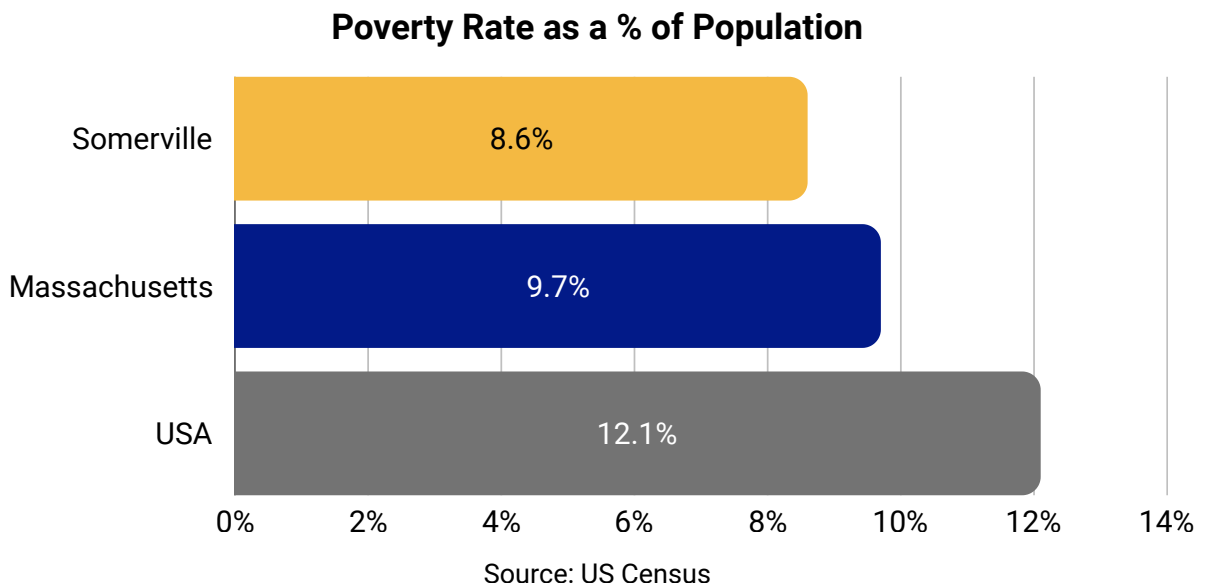
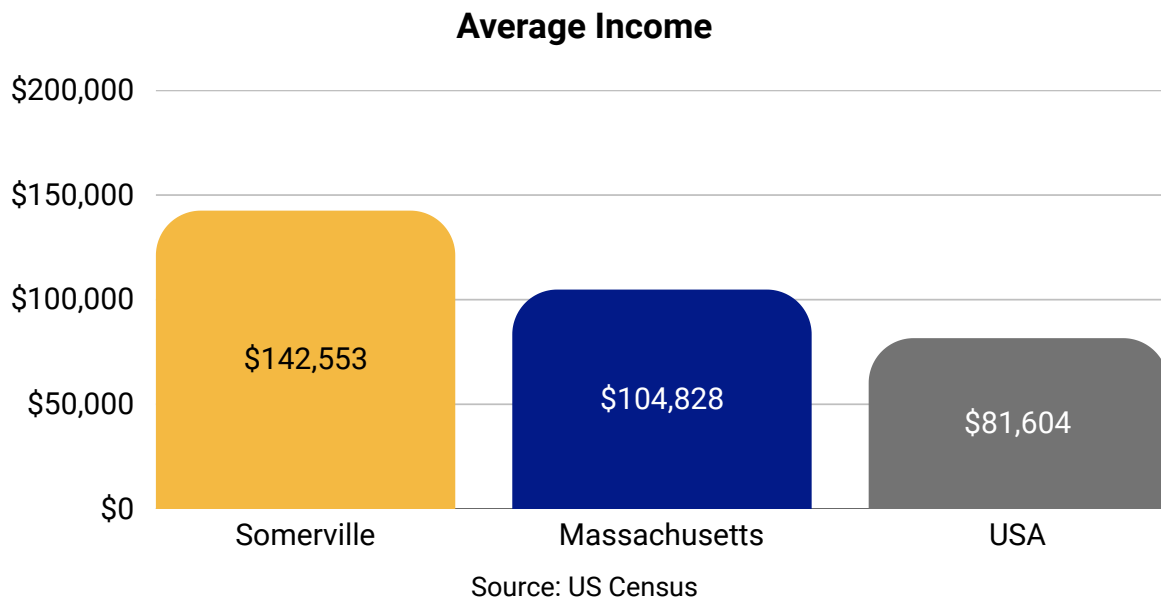
In comparison to many other places, Somerville is doing well when it comes to income and poverty⁹. The overall median income in Somerville is \$143K, compared to \$104K in Massachusetts overall, and the poverty rate is 8.6%, compared to 9.7% statewide and 12.1% nationally. Even when we look at extreme poverty, only 4.7% of Somerville residents meet that criteria, compared to 5.0% in Massachusetts and 6% nationally. Nevertheless, this means that **at least 6,813 people in Somerville are living in poverty** and **3,699 people are living in extreme poverty**¹⁰. Given the historic limitations of US Census data, there is a good chance that the numbers of poor in Somerville are even higher.

There is also, sadly, evidence that things are getting worse for the poor in our community. The Somerville Homeless Coalition reports that homelessness and financial hardship has increased in recent years; **visits to the food pantry have gone up by 17% and the distribution of bags of groceries has gone up by 20% since last year.**

“The reality is that wages are staying the same, while costs are going up. Economic, food, and housing insecurity are issues in our community. These are things I am really worried about. If we could get these baseline needs addressed, other things might become easier” - Interviewee



Among families with children in Somerville, 4.1% are living below the poverty line, which, like other statistics, is better than the state (9.3%) and US averages. (13.3%). However, **the poverty rate in Somerville spikes to 25.3% when looking at single, female-headed households.** While this is equivalent to MA overall (26.1%) and lower than the US overall (31.3%), it still represents a gap that ought to be addressed¹¹.





Approximately 41% of the total poor population in Somerville was employed at the time surveyed, compared to 57% in MA but 28% nationally. Overall, though, 29.1% of the poor population in Somerville did not work at all in the past 12 months, compared to 21.7% and 21.3% in MA and the US respectively¹². **The higher percentage of non-workers among Somerville's poor may reflect the skew towards older, retired people living in poverty in the City.**

The poverty rate is heavily affected by age. 19.6% of Somerville residents over 65 (~1,394 people), are living in poverty, meaning that our elder population is more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than the overall population. This is significantly higher than the state and the country overall (10.8% and 11.2%). Women are also somewhat more likely to be impoverished than men (9.8%, vs 7.3%). And whites at 7% are less likely to be impoverished than the overall average (total non-white rate not available).

...our elder population is more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than the overall population. This is significantly higher than the state and the country overall (10.8% and 11.2%)

Poverty is distributed unevenly across Somerville's neighborhoods. The "Social Vulnerability Index" is a combined measure calculated by the CDC which uses multiple measures to determine an index of socioeconomic vulnerability for different geographic locations¹³. According to the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index, in 2022 (the last year for which data are available) **the census tract locations with the highest rates of poverty include West Somerville near the Arlington Border, North of Magoun Square, and East**

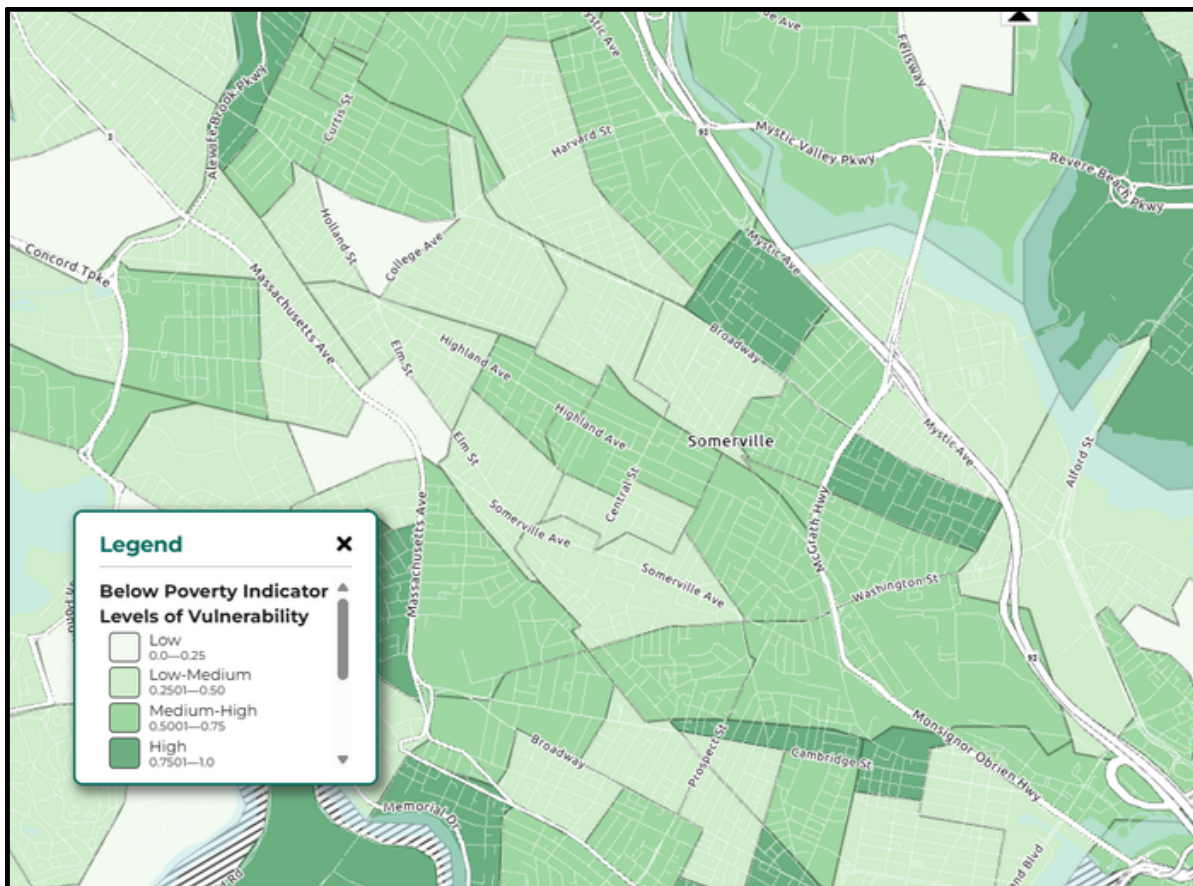
Somerville, with statewide rankings on the Poverty level index of 0.91, 0.85, and 0.81 respectively on a scale of 0 to 1, with 1 being the highest poverty level statewide. In contrast, **the lowest overall levels of poverty is in the Davis Square area**, with an index ranking 0.19. (See Figure 1)

Solutions

There are numerous programs in place to address economic needs ranging from the Federal to the hyper-local.

According to the data from the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), in April 2026, there were 4,200 households and 5,867 individuals in Somerville receiving SNAP benefits. Although these numbers are down from 4,868 households and

Figure 1 : Social Vulnerability Index by Census Tract¹⁴



6,794 individuals a year earlier¹⁵, this likely does not reflect cases being moved out of poverty. Rather, the lower numbers in 2025 are most likely the result of cuts to the program on the Federal level that caused people to be removed from its rolls¹⁶. Federal cuts were compounded by under-investment in DTA staff capacity at the state level. In March of 2026, the Somerville Food Coalition signed on to [a letter](#) to state decision-makers by Make Hunger History to advocate for an increase in state funding for DTA and a strengthening of SNAP benefits.

On the local level, Somerville benefits from a robust network of non-profit partners meeting basic food needs, such as Project Soup, East End House and others that are part of the Somerville Food Coalition. These organizations have stepped up to try to bridge the gaps created by cuts in food stamps. Somerville also has a number of local efforts such as “Community Fridges” and the [Community Cooks](#) non-profit that empower neighbors to help neighbors with basic needs, as well as Mutual Aid of Medford and Somerville (MAMAS) that runs grocery delivery programs, food assistance gift cards, gardening collectives and other initiatives to support people in need. A guide to food resources can be found on the Somerville Food Coalition [website](#).



In the spring of 2024, Somerville launched a pilot of a [Guaranteed Basic Income program](#), which served approximately 200 households for one year. This program provided \$750/month of direct, unrestricted cash assistance to these vulnerable households. The evaluation of this program is expected soon but was not available in time for publication of this report. Naturally, the program's continuation rests on budgetary availability.

Housing and Homelessness

In spite of the many advantages we have as a community, Somerville residents face significant challenges in housing. The rate of home ownership is about half that of the state and national averages, which may be due in part to our high student population from nearby colleges and universities. Renters face pressures in Somerville too; rental rates are significantly higher than the Massachusetts average, with just 4% of units being vacant.

Lack of affordable housing and poor housing conditions contribute to a wide range of health issues, including respiratory diseases, lead poisoning, infectious diseases, and poor mental health. At the extreme are those without housing, including those who are unhoused or living in unstable or transient housing situations who are more likely to delay medical care, and have mortality rates up to four times higher than those who have secure housing.

The housing crisis is at an all-time high and housing has been labeled a public health issue¹⁷. Housing cost burdens are historically high in the Greater Boston area, especially for renters and Black or Latino households¹⁸. Housing cuts across many dimensions that



operate both locally and regionally. These include the construction of adequate housing volumes and types, the availability and access to affordable housing, evictions and tenant support, as well as homelessness.

Besides overall financial well-being, housing is a basic need that affects almost all others. Somerville has a very limited supply of available housing stock. While in the US overall, 90% of units are occupied, that

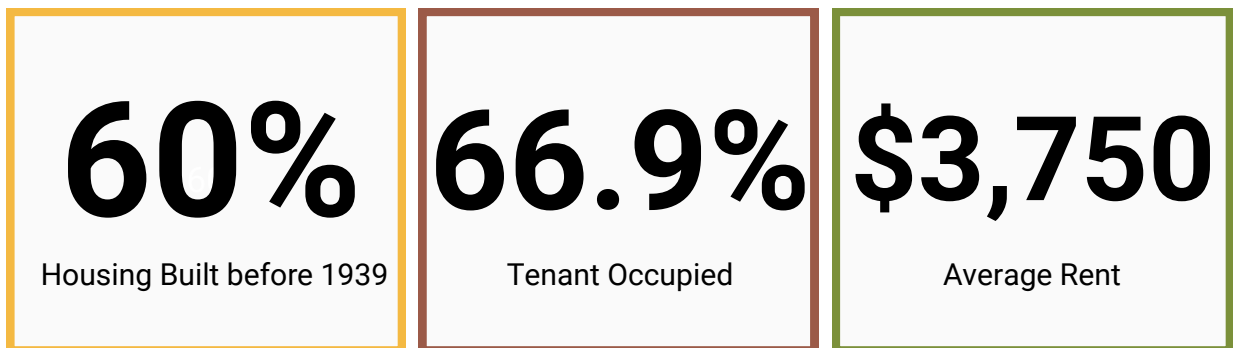


number is 92% for Massachusetts, and 96% for Somerville. Somerville is also a rent heavy city. Approximately **twice as many units are renter-occupied than are owner occupied**. That proposition is reversed for the U.S. overall and for Massachusetts. **Somerville housing stock is also extremely old**. Approximately 60% of all units were built before 1939, compared to 30 percent in MA and 11% nationally. US Census estimates for 2024 put the median rent in Somerville is \$2,575 a month, compared to \$1,848 for MA and 1,487 for the US overall¹⁹. Zillow, which is well-respected source of rental data, shows current rents at \$3,750/month in Somerville as of June, 2026, versus a national average of \$2,006/month.

The last available census data reports that only 20% of the renting population are paying more than 35% of their income on rent, compared to just over 20% for MA and the US²⁰. However, The Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) reports seeing **a lot of substandard living conditions, and units where families have double- or tripled-up**. These measures may mask the true nature of the housing crisis by allowing some to “afford” living in Somerville by making significant sacrifices in quality of life.

Housing Construction & Affordable Housing

Several initiatives to expand housing are underway in Somerville, many including units set aside for lower income residents²¹. Examples include housing developments at 299 Broadway, 24 Webster Ave. and Clarendon Hill. Recently, the [2025 Housing Report Card](#) issued by The Boston Foundation, Boston University and Boston Indicators ranked Somerville among the top producers of new housing. The City aims to have 20% of housing affordable “in perpetuity” by [2040](#), which may be met through public housing, tax credits and other programs. In addition, inclusionary zoning rules require that 20% of new housing with four or more units is rent restricted²².



Evictions

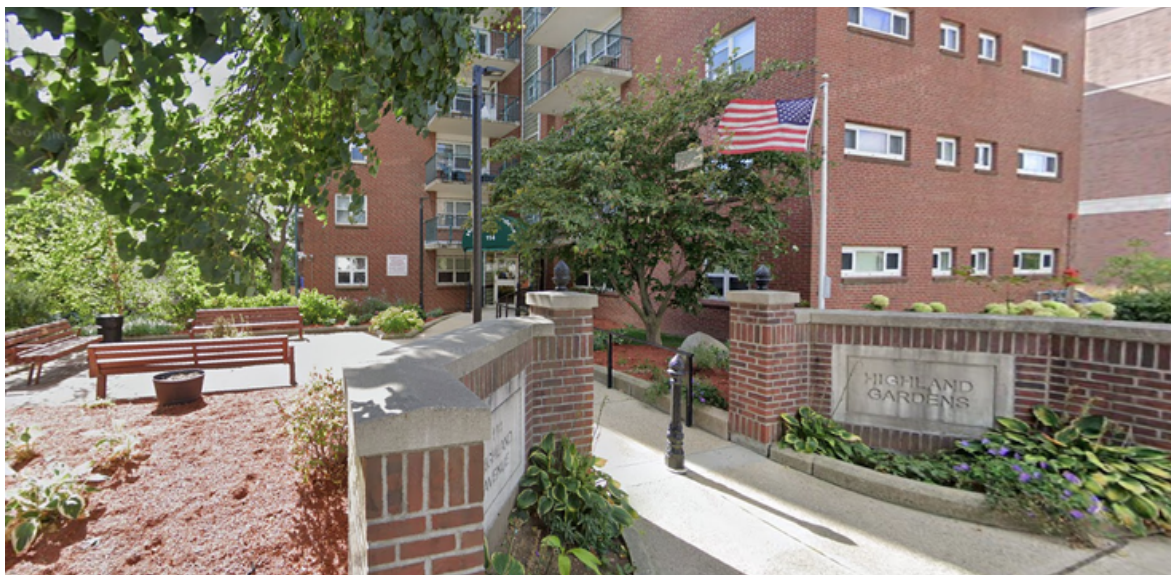
According to [data produced by the Massachusetts Trial Court](#), there were 251 new eviction cases filed in calendar year 2025, with 352 defendants. Of those with resolution as of April 2026, **81% were found in favor of the tenants**. This is a slight increase from the 237 cases filed in 2024, of which 80% were favorable to tenants.

However, Samantha Wolfe from CAAS tells a more complex story that takes place outside the court system, since most evictions never go to court. Typically a landlord will let the tenants know verbally or in writing that they want them out and the **tenants move before any legal action takes place**. According to CAAS, **many evictions happen when buildings are sold and purchased by investors**. The new owners often raise rents on the existing tenants by hundreds of dollars, and occasionally up to \$1,000 or more. Some simply send tenants a no-fault notice to quit. This primarily impacts low and moderate income tenants.

Homelessness

While this report is focused on Somerville, it should be understood that **homelessness is a regional problem**; people who are facing housing insecurity move from place to place, particularly along transit lines, so the problem of homelessness is shared across neighboring communities, and is affected by regional factors.

At the state level, homelessness nearly doubled from 2022 to 2024 – from 15,500 to 29,360 individuals in Massachusetts. Cambridge, our next door neighbor, saw a 70%





increase over this two-year period, from 440 to 747 people. In Greater Boston overall, there was a 27% increase in homelessness from 2022 to 2023, reaching 12,674 people – the highest number since the previous peak of nearly 15,000 people in 2014. **The record highs in homelessness in 2024 were driven by high rents, longstanding housing shortages, and population changes.** These problems have only continued to expand.

The state level homelessness crisis is reflected at the local level. Since COVID, the annual census of homeless people in Somerville shows a clear increase, with the count in January, 2026 recording **178 people on the street and across all available shelters and warming centers. This is the highest number recorded since 2019** and an increase from the 147 people counted in 2025 and the 153 counted in 2024, which were also peak years. Tragically, one homeless woman [lost her life](#) at the end of 2024 when a fire broke out at an encampment in Somerville, highlighting the risks faced by this population.

Apart from the structural issues mentioned above such as rent increases and housing shortages, Mike Libby of the Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) estimates that 60% of homelessness is chronic, with people struggling to stay housed due to mental health, addiction or other causes.

The increased visibility of homelessness in neighborhoods such as Davis Square, has caused the issue to become a flashpoint. Residents have complained about tents and encampments, an increase in trash and visible drug use.

At the Massachusetts State level, homelessness nearly doubled from 2022 to 2024 ...

The record highs in homelessness in 2024 were driven by high rents, longstanding housing shortages and population changes.

The City provides sharps bins to reduce the visibility of drug use, and the SHC focuses on addressing the problem through proactive outreach, building relationships and providing food and shelter for unhoused people. The SHC has also recently opened a new shelter that is accessible to the disabled, which is a first for Massachusetts, and is working to provide more addiction services.

But advocates and those who work with the homeless are concerned about a recent [ruling by the US Supreme Court](#) that allows people to be fined or arrested for being homeless.



Health, Mental Health and Health Equity

Along with income and housing, health and access to healthcare is a third major pillar of basic needs. By most key metrics Somerville is healthier than most American cities. The [City Health Dashboard project](#), which collects 45 health metrics across 1200 cities, reports that Somerville has better than average outcomes for life expectancy, premature deaths, breast cancer deaths, cardiovascular deaths, colorectal cancer deaths, high blood pressure, opioid deaths, independent living difficulty, frequent physical distress and obesity. Somerville is average in terms of frequent mental distress



“There are a lot of non-profits and resources in our region, but the coordination of resources can be hard. Many organizations have screening tools for social needs, as do many clinical organizations. But not all clinical organizations want to partner with community organizations. It would be great if we could be using the same tools and listening to each other.” - Interviewee



However, as with other basic needs, the situation is more complicated when we look closely. In the case of health outcomes, there is significant variation by neighborhood. **East Somerville, West Somerville and the Winter Hill fare significantly worse than other parts of the city** in critical measures such as overall life expectancy, diabetes, high blood pressure, independent living difficulty, and frequent mental and physical distress. (Many of the other metrics are not available at the neighborhood level.) Notably, these three neighborhoods are areas with larger Black/African American and Hispanic/Latin populations. The maps below show 2015 life

expectancy by neighborhood (shorter life expectancies are darker on the left and African-American populations on the right). The maps look very similar, showing shorter life expectancy in the African-American neighborhoods. Notably, while overall life expectancy in Somerville is 80.3, life expectancy among African-Americans is 72.8, **a 7.6 year gap** (numbers do not add up due to rounding).

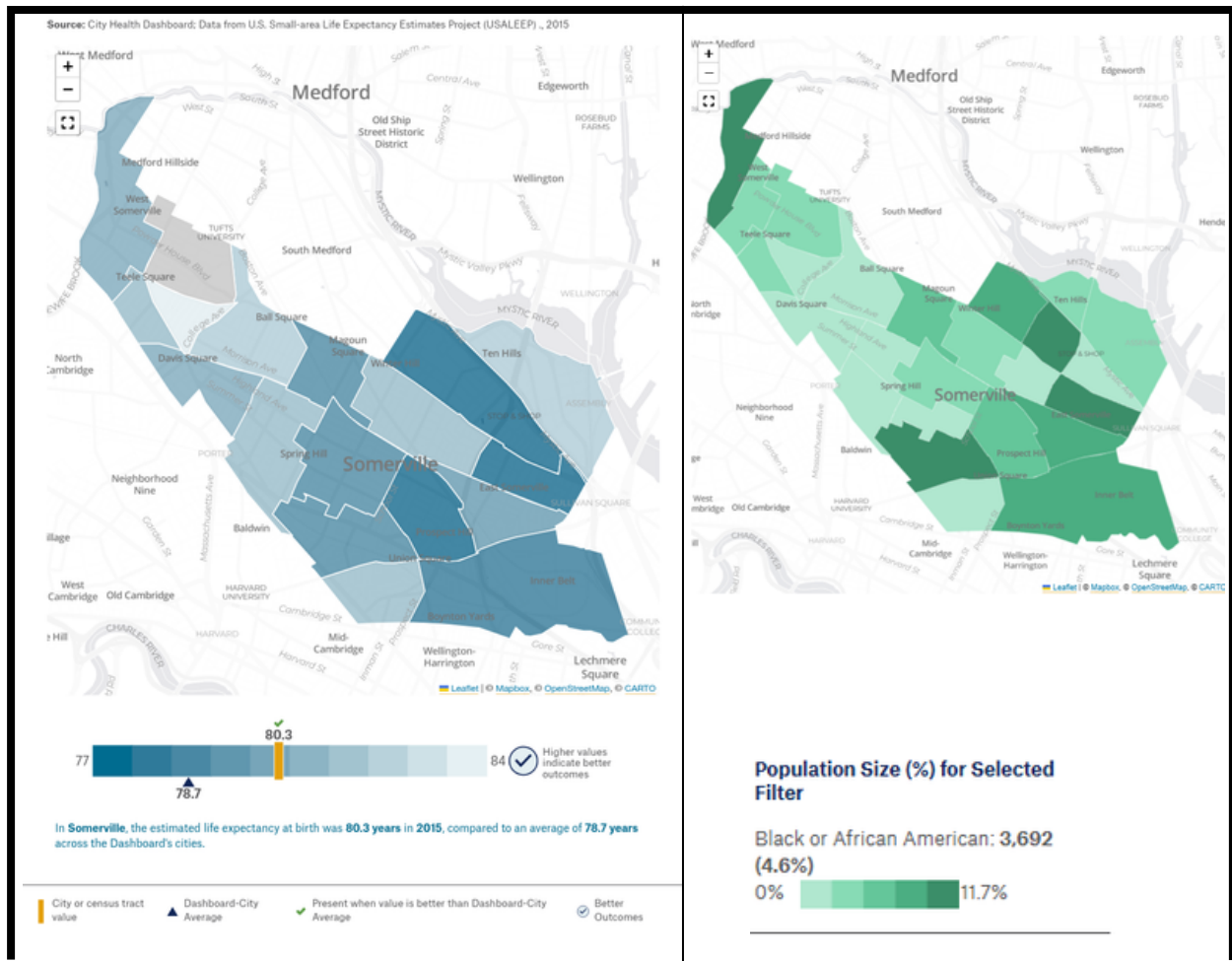
Female life-expectancy overall is 82.7 in Somerville; male is lower at 77.7. While we do not have specific data by race, given the 5 year gender gap we can extrapolate that Black male life expectancy would likely be around 2.5 years lower than African Americans overall. This would lead to a 9.1 year gap for African American men when compared to the overall life expectancy in the city. This is consistent with recent findings about Black males in Boston published by the Boston Public Health Commission²³.

Figure 2: Key Somerville Health Outcomes Compared to All Participating Cities



Somerville fares better than most cities on several health indicators, including lower rates of smoking, physical inactivity, and teen births. However, smoking and physical inactivity are more common in the city's eastern, western, and northern neighborhoods, consistent with the findings above.

Figure 3: Life Expectancy (left) and African American Population (right) by Somerville Neighborhood



Some environmental health factors also look good when comparing Somerville to other cities. Somerville has lower than average air pollution, and CO2 emissions, with higher than average walkability and park access.

Lead exposure is an example of a major health equity issue. The most recent Massachusetts Childhood Lead Poisoning Surveillance Report found that in 2023, children living in low-income communities were nearly 3.3 times more likely to have elevated blood lead levels (BLLs) than children in high-income communities. The good



news is this disparity has been narrowing since 2020. However, racial and ethnic disparities have not changed very much. **In 2023, Hispanic children were 1.7 times more likely to have elevated BLLs compared to non-Hispanic children. Black children were 1.9 times more likely, and multi-racial children were 4.4 times more likely to have elevated BLLs compared to White children.** Past and present housing discrimination, segregation, and neighborhood disinvestment are the major reasons why communities of color and low-income communities are at an unfairly high risk of exposure to lead.

Due to the older housing stock, **Somerville's housing stock with potential lead exposure is extremely high, with an estimated 54.3% of housing having potential lead risk, compared to an average of 24.7% across other cities.** These metrics do not vary widely across the city.

Mental Health

Our data on mental health and substance use comes from the 2025 [Wellbeing Report](#) from the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA). This report is based on a study conducted every three years across eight cities and towns that are served by the CHA. This year the survey included almost 1,000 participants across the target communities.

The CHA found that many people are facing significant stress, anxiety, and despair. They cite the MA Department of Public Health's Community Health Equity Survey, that showed 1 in 3 adults (38%) and nearly half of youth (45%) in the communities served by the CHA reported high or very high levels of mental

health distress. This distress was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; but even now, several years after the height of the pandemic, "impacts on mental health continue and are amplified by new stressors. Across the United States, increasing stress, social isolation, and mental health challenges among parents, youth, and the general population are driving a worsening mental health crisis."

While Somerville ranks lower than many neighboring communities, and about on par with state averages for mental-health related emergency visits, it's important to note that visits to the Emergency Department do not show the full picture. This measure misses who may have barriers to accessing care due to cost, lack of insurance



"Thinking about how you are going to pay rent, sometimes you need a car, and then you have to get a second job, it puts more on your back and it brings you down, it puts you in a spiral" -

Interviewee



coverage, inability to get an appointment, trust or language barriers.

Cultural barriers are yet another factor. Some people may deny need because it is not culturally acceptable, or because they feel underrepresented by the cultural background of providers, and even documentation to have the proper health insurance that would cover mental health services.

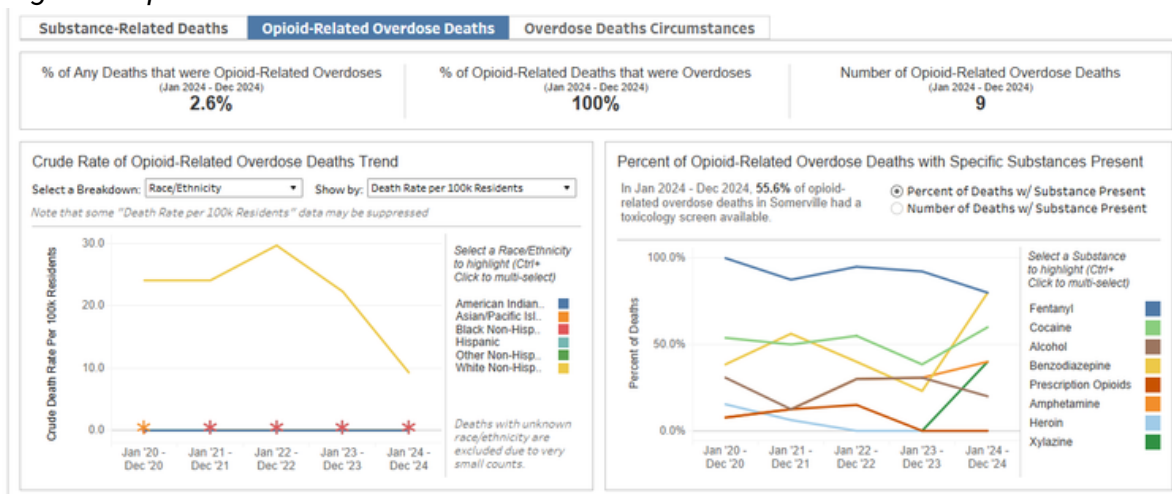
Mental health is also closely intertwined with the ability to access basic needs. Participants in the CHA study identified stressors related to housing and lack of income as drivers of poor mental health. Youth also called out broader issues such as climate change, and many people of color and immigrants identified the impact of discrimination and harmful social or political conditions.

Substance Use

In 2023, Opioid use was lower in Somerville than other cities. That year, there were 22.5 per 100,000 opioid deaths, which suggests 18 deaths per year given the city's population of 80,000. The proportion is higher among Whites (25 per 100,000), and significantly higher among males (33.6 per 100,000) compared to females (11.3 per 100,000). These discrepancies align with national data.

In calendar 2024, the MA Bureau of Substance and Addiction Services reported 9 opioid related deaths, a significant reduction from previous years. There were 23 substance abuse related deaths overall, with 12 deaths due to alcohol abuse²⁴.

Figure 4: Opioid-Related Deaths



Between July 2024 and June 2025, there were 1,081 ER visits related to substance abuse, with a **remarkably high rate among Hispanics of 3,701.8 visits per 100K residents**. That number has been rising consistently since 2020. This rate of ER visits is more than 3.5x the rate among non-Hispanic whites and 2.37x the rate among non-Hispanic Blacks.

Figure 5: Substance Abuse ER Visits by Race/Ethnicity Over Time

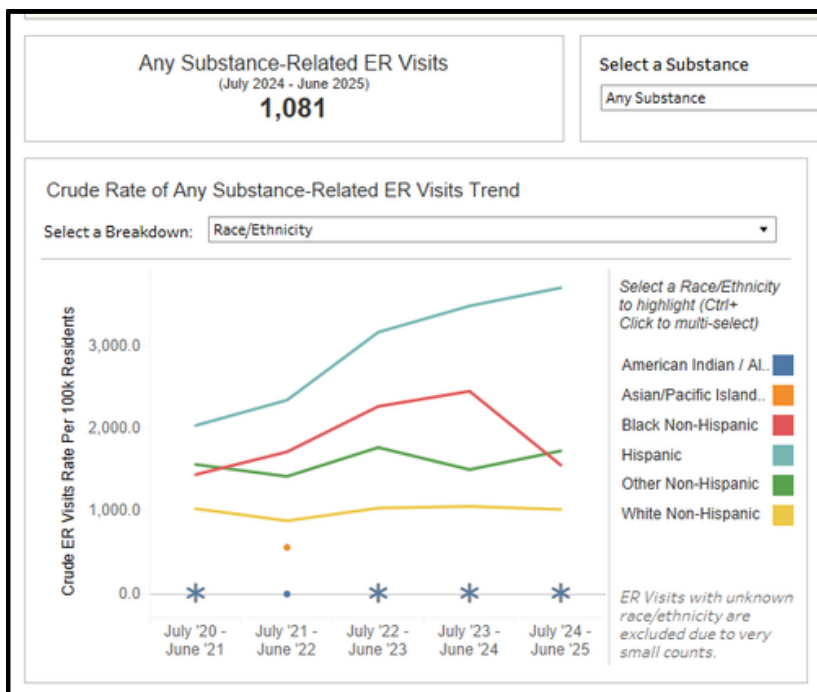
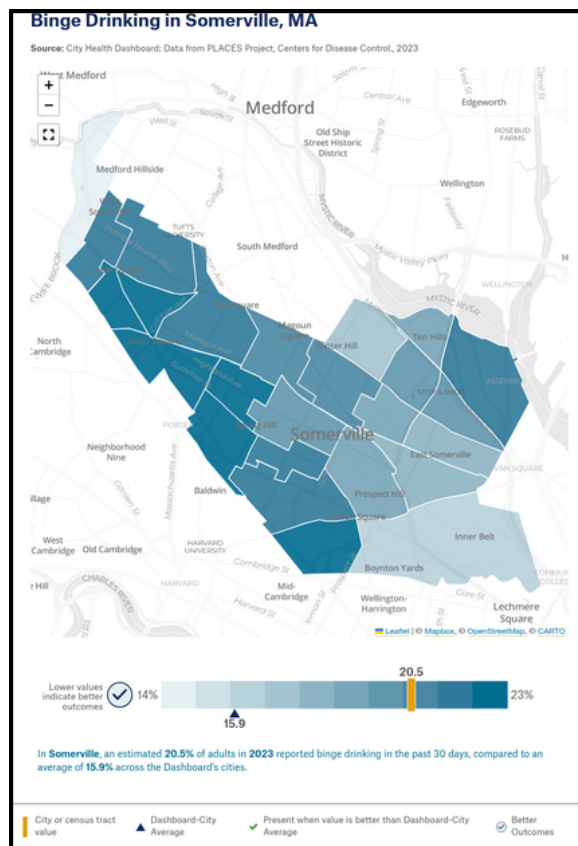


Figure 6: Binge Drinking Prevalence by Somerville Neighborhood

Binge drinking is a bigger problem in Somerville than the average of other cities. In 2023, 20.5% of adults reported binge drinking in the past 30 days, compared to 15.9% on average. **Notably, binge drinking is not prevalent in the neighborhoods affected by other health issues as described above.** Rather, high levels of binge drinking are seen in the areas of **Union Square, Ball Square, Davis Square, Highland Avenue, and Somerville Avenue.** Given this distribution, our hypothesis is that high rates of binge drinking are attributable to the high percentage of young people in the affected areas; thirty-three percent of Somerville's residents are between the ages of 20 and 29, compared to 13.1% in the U.S. overall²⁵.





Health Insurance and Healthcare Access

According to US Census data, Somerville residents have high rates of dental and prenatal care, and only slightly lower rates of routine checkups. This is likely due to the relatively young population in the city. With respect to the critical topic of health insurance, **only 2.3% of the under 65 population are uninsured**, which is markedly better than the national average of 9.7%. On this measure, **East Somerville, West Somerville and Winter Hill come out as areas that diverge from the city average**. Two East Somerville census tracts and one in Winter Hill have uninsured rates over 7%, which is more than three times the city average. West Somerville fares better than East Somerville here, with uninsured reaching 4.5%, still almost double the overall average.

Notably, **African-Americans, who are 8.9% uninsured in the U.S. and 4.9% uninsured in Massachusetts, have an extremely low uninsured rate in Somerville, of 0.3%**. However, **the Hispanic/Latino population has an 8.3% uninsured rate, which is higher than the overall average for Somerville**. It should be noted that even this high rate of uninsurance is better than the national uninsured rate for Hispanics/Latinos, which sits at 17% as of the last census.

The Massachusetts uninsurance rate among Hispanic Latinos is 4.5%, which is lower than both the municipal and national rates. This relatively high rate of uninsured status among Hispanics and Latinos in Somerville cannot be solely attributed to foreign birth or



citizenship status given that the uninsured rate among non-citizen residents of Somerville is only 3.6%²⁶. Other groups with high uninsurance rates include the unemployed (18.7% uninsured) and those with only a high school degree (8% uninsured).

We note again that these numbers may not accurately reflect the reality of marginalized populations given the historic limitations of the US Census.

Intersection of Immigration and Basic Needs

While we have discussed immigration and basic needs issues separately, there is, of course, overlap between the two. Immigrant status is correlated with challenges across all the basic needs topics discussed in this report. For example, while 7.2% of native U.S. citizens are living in poverty, 13.26% of foreign born residents are living in poverty in Somerville. This means that **foreign born residents almost twice as likely to be living in poverty than native-born individuals in the city²⁷**.

Population	Population Estimate	Rate
All Native-Born	61,706	N/A
Below 100 percent of the poverty level	4,448	7.21%
All Foreign-born, non-Native Citizen:	17,835	N/A
Below 100 percent of the poverty level	2,365	13.26%

The current flurry of ICE activity in Somerville has also had troubling effects on immigrant residents. CAAS reports that fear of deportation has prevented people from going to work and has led some households to fall behind on rent and struggle to afford basic necessities. The political climate thereby initiates a vicious cycle towards financial precarity. Immigrant tenants may also be more likely to be impacted by evictions and displacements, moving out quickly rather than awaiting legal action in a hostile system.

Finally, given that mental health is impacted by economic, political and social uncertainty, it is safe to assume that **these factors are degrading the mental wellbeing of immigrant residents of Somerville**.

Challenges faced by immigrants in Somerville are compounded by the fact that **many assistance programs are not available to non-citizens and other programs are not available for undocumented immigrants²⁸**. The state and city make up for some but not all of the benefits available through citizen-only programs.

One example of a positive local initiative is a Municipal Voucher Program offered by the City of Somerville, which offers deep rental subsidies and prioritizes those who are not eligible for federal housing programs due to immigration status.

Unfortunately, even when immigrants are eligible for services, fear can be a barrier to gaining access. Social services providers in focus groups conducted by the HRC shared that many immigrants, whether legal or not, are scared to access non-governmental social services programs for fear of being detained by ICE when they show up for services. Fear of ICE has also led immigrant families to keep children home from school, which is not only a problem in itself, but also requires adult care cascading to lost wages.





Part IV: Conclusions & Recommendations

The City of Somerville is fortunate to be well off relative to many other communities in the US. We are rich in resources, education and in the diversity of our residents, and we are fortunate to be home to numerous organizations and individuals that are passionate about serving and making life better for those on the margins.

Examining the state of our immigrant community and the access our residents have to basic services is one important way (among many) to understand the state of human rights in the city. Our research shows that city-wide averages of income, health and housing mask pockets of inequities within the city. According to the [City Health Dashboard](#), Like Cambridge, Somerville skews towards having more advantaged than disadvantaged households. On multiple measures, however, East Somerville, West Somerville and Winter Hill come out as neighborhoods that are lagging behind relative to other areas. Nevertheless, our rates of poverty are actually better than the state-wide and national averages.

One way to understand this data is that Somerville policies embrace diversity of economic status. Rather than having a “Not in my backyard” mindset, our city is working to build affordable housing and to make Somerville inclusive for residents of many backgrounds. This is commendable, and something we should take pride in.

Meanwhile we need to continue our efforts at making sure that the basic needs of everyone in Somerville are met, even as shifts at the federal level might make this challenging. According to this year’s annual count, we are already seeing a spike in the number of unhoused people, which has in turn become a cause of friction in some neighborhoods. The [Center for American Progress reports](#) that more cuts may be coming to programs like Section 8, SNAP and other programs aimed at supporting poor families, as well as some programs that support the construction of affordable housing. What steps can help us avoid the worst consequences of some of these federal cuts? How should we prepare to protect human rights as the environment around us changes?



Recommendations

After consulting with our partner agencies, the HRC recommends the following actions in connection with the findings in this report. Most of these are related to housing; we are continuing to research additional options focused on immigrant rights, healthcare, income and food access.

State Level Policy Solutions

- We support rent control and rent stabilization initiatives at the state level as well as [TOPA](#) (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act), and the transfer fee for Real Estate transactions

Municipal Policy Solutions

- We support the work of the Anti-Displacement Task Force (ADTF) and their 50 programming and policy recommendations that aim to equitably reduce the displacement rate of people who live in, have businesses in, or create in the City of Somerville.
- We recommend the funding of robust rental assistance programs to help low income residents to stay in their homes with a focus on older adults, immigrants and others that are disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis
- We suggest exploring how to create more new affordable housing that is targeted to those at the very lowest end of the income spectrum such as those with incomes between 0% and 50% AMI. While inclusionary zoning produces housing affordable to those 50% and up and tax credits help those at 50% of AMI very little new housing is being developed targeted to those at the lowest end of the income spectrum. While this is a challenging endeavor, we note that there are no options comparable to rooming houses that used to be available to very low income residents. This is a real gap that needs to be addressed.
- The city should review and identify gaps in services for the elderly poor and work to create programs to fill those gaps
- The city should pay careful heed to the results of the GBI pilot and its potential to lift our neighbors out of poverty.
- The city should look to understand how to adapt its service model to fit the needs of those currently affected. This understanding must move beyond the anecdotal and must be rooted in meeting people where they are. For example, if the fear of accessing government programming and services cannot be overcome, the city should explore with those affected whether accessing the same services through a non-profit be accessible. If so, the city could shift the programming from being city funded and led to city funded and led by appropriate community partners.



- Culturally sensitive approaches to mental health should be expanded where possible. SPS along with The Beautiful Stuff Project have run IMPACT (a non-clinical art therapy group for Spanish-speaking moms) with great results. Since 2022, SOIA took over partially funding the program along with Somerville Arts Council. Connexion has also been an incredible partner in making their space available for this every Friday during the school year. More initiatives like this one could go a long way in filling the gap that currently exists between supply and demand for culturally and linguistically accessible mental health resources for immigrants.

Service Providers (Governmental and non-Governmental)

- Consider increased outreach and services targeting the three neighborhoods that have higher rates of poverty and poorer health outcomes.

Non-policy initiatives

- While many service agencies are likely in touch on the issues discussed in this report, there may be additional opportunities to convene agencies working on issues of poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, housing stability and health equity to amplify these issues, share best practices, and to generate ideas for collaboration.
- Research the grassroots response to ICE in Minnesota and establish the groundwork to prepare for a similar response here in Somerville

Thank You!

We appreciate you taking the time to read this report and welcome your feedback and collaboration on the priorities of the HRC



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/SomervilleHumanRightsCommission>



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Instagram

[@friendsofsomervillehrc](https://www.instagram.com/friendsofsomervillehrc)



End Notes

1. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/administrations-last-minute-restrictions-likely-to-worsen-impact-of-medicaid-work>
2. www.un.org
3. RSJ has served as the primary liaison office for the HRC through May 2026. At that time we were notified by RSJ that they would no longer serve as our liaison. As of this writing, the HRC has not been informed of its new liaison office.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/ice-detention-facilities-expansion-warehouses-c61c3e23c4246e94a760b4d979cb9c48>
5. <https://www.wbur.org/news/2026/04/01/7000-ice-arrests-massachusetts-trump>
6. As of May 28, 2026, additional revisions to the Welcoming City ordinance have been approved by City Council and are awaiting Mayoral Approval. See: City Council Agenda Item 26-0919
7. <https://forumtogether.org/article/the-dignity-act-of-2025-bill-summary/>
8. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-immigration>
9. In 2025, the poverty threshold for a family of two adults and two children was \$25,938 in income. This number changes yearly with inflation and is lower for smaller households and higher for larger households, as defined by the US Census. In this section we use the terms “poor”, “in poverty” and “impoverished” interchangeably to specifically refer to persons or households whose incomes are below the poverty threshold. Extreme poverty is defined as anyone living in a household with total cash income less than 50% of the poverty threshold. -
<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>
10. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535>
11. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1702?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535>
12. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1702?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535>
13. For a full explanation of this measure see: <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/index.html>. The program for ongoing updates of this measure was eliminated by the current administration. Previous results are maintained by the CDC by court order.



End Notes (continued)

14. <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/place-health/php/svi/svi-interactive-map.html#preparedMaps>
15. <https://www.mass.gov/lists/departments-of-transitional-assistance-caseload-by-zip-code-reports#2025-caseload-reports>
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17. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2025/new-insights-into-connection-between-housing-quality-and-population-health>
18. <https://www.tbf.org/news-and-insights/reports/2025/november/greater-boston-housing-report-card-2025> (p. 40)
19. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSCP1Y2024.CP04?q=somerville+MA+Housing+vs+MA+vs+US&t=Housing+Units:Occupancy+Characteristics>
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27. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT1Y2024.B06012?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535&tp=false>
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- City of Somerville Anti-Displacement Task Force Report
- City of Somerville Website
- Mount Auburn Hospital 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment
- Social Vulnerability Index
- Somerville Homeless Coalition closing fiscal year FY25 stats
- <https://www.ice.gov/statistics>
- <https://ice-arrests.apps.deportationdata.org/>
- US Census Data



Appendix

HRC Partners

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)

The MIRA Coalition

Mutual Aid of Medford and Somerville (MAMAS)

Somerville Food Coalition

The Somerville Homeless Coalition

The Somerville Office of Housing Stability

The Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA)

The Welcome Project



Table 1. Somerville Demographics compared to State and National Averages
(Source: US Census)

	Somerville	Massachusetts	USA
Population	81,045	7,029,917	331,449,281
Education: % with BA or higher	73.8%	48.3%	36.8%
# of Housing Units	36,498	3,057,853	146,740,964
Households	35,099	2,829,804	132,737,146
Median Age	30.9	40.1	39.2
% without Healthcare	2.6%	2.8%	8.2%
Median Household Income	\$142,553	\$104,828	\$81,604
Average Family Size	2.9	3.03	3.11
Employment rate	79.5%	64.4%	60.6%
Children under 18	9.5%	19%	21.4%
65 and older	8.7%	18.7%	18%
Resident Mobility <i>(moved from another state within the past year)</i>	4.5%	2.2%	2.1%
Veterans	0.7%	3.9%	5.9%
Poverty	8.6%	9.7%	12.1%
Disability	7.8%	12.6%	13.7%



Table 2. Somerville Race & Ethnicity Statistics versus State and National Averages (Source: US Census)

	Somerville	Massachusetts	USA
White alone	67.1%	69.6%	61.6%
Black or African American alone	5.5%	7.0%	12.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.2%	0.3%	1.1%
Asian alone	10.6%	7.2%	6.0%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%
Some Other Race alone	6.3%	7.1%	8.4%
Two or more races	10.2%	8.7%	10.2%

Table 3. Housing Statistics: Somerville versus State and National Averages

	Somerville	Massachusetts	USA
Average Rent	\$2,575	\$1,848	\$1,487
Home Ownership Rate	33.1%	62.4%	65.3%
Housing Units	36,498	3,057,853	146,740,964
Housing Occupancy	35,099 occupied / 1,399 vacant (~4%)	2,829,804 occupied / 228,049 vacant (7.45%)	132,737,146 occupied / 14,003,818 vacant (9.54%)
Owner Occupied	7000 units	1,291,032 units	



Table 4: Population mix by country of birth and home language; Somerville v. State and National Averages (Source: US Census)

	Somerville	Massachusetts	USA
Foreign Born Residents	22.3%	18.7%	14.8%
% of Foreign-born residents who are naturalized citizens	49.7%	52.1%	51.4%
Language at home is English only	72%	74.2%	77%
Non-English Language spoken at home	28%	25.8%	23%

Table 5: Languages Spoken at Home in Somerville

	Percentage	Margin of Error
English only	72.00%	± 4.4%
Spanish	7.20%	± 2.7%
Other Indo-European languages	11.50%	± 2.6%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	6.40%	± 1.5%
Other languages	2.80%	± 2.6%