

Post #	Section (page)	Quote
1	About the HRC	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.
2	About the HRC	Our Mission: “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.”
3	About the HRC	Section 2-242 of the City Ordinance outlines four key functions of the HRC, namely that the HRC should: 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
4	About the HRC	Read the 2025-2026 Annual Report : “A Strong Foundation with Remaining Gaps Across Communities”
5	About the HRC - Carousel	The HRC’s priorities this year were Immigrant Rights and Equitable Access to Basic Needs including Housing, Income and Healthcare

5	About the HRC - Carousel	Our priorities fit under the category of Economic, Cultural and Social rights protected by the UDHR, which are elaborated under several articles.
5	About the HRC - Carousel	Article 22 (Right to Social Security),
5	About the HRC - Carousel	Article 23 (Right to Work),
5	About the HRC - Carousel	Article 25 (Right to Adequate Standard of Living)
5	About the HRC - Carousel	Article 28 (Right to a Free and Fair World)
6	HRC Report	Our research shows that Somerville is 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.
7	Immigration	Somerville has been a Sanctuary City since 1987.
7	Immigration	Somerville, along with the City of Chelsea, is currently defending its sanctuary policies in federal court against a lawsuit brought by the Trump administration
7	Immigration	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 here: https://www.takenbyice.com/
7	Immigration	While the media has focused on ICE "raids," these are just one visible part of aggressive immigration enforcement tactics that have increased under the current administration.

		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 to detain and deport that take place under the radar of mainstream media.
8	Poverty	The Somerville 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 approximately 6,813 people in Somerville are living in poverty and 3,699 people are living in extreme poverty . ¹
8	Poverty	Poverty is unevenly distributed geographically across Somerville
8	Poverty	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).
8	Poverty	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 addressed. ²
8	Poverty	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.
8	Poverty	foreign born residents are 84% more likely to be living in poverty than native-born individuals in the city

¹.<https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535>

²

<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S1702?q=poverty+somerville,+massachusetts,+MA+,+United+states.&g=160XX00US2562535>

9	Food	in April 2026, there were 4,200 households and 5,867 individuals in Somerville receiving SNAP benefits. These numbers are down from 4,868 households and 6,794 individuals a year earlier. ³ This likely does not reflect cases being moved out of poverty. Rather, it is most likely the results of cuts to the program on the Federal level in 2025. ⁴
9	Food	A guide to food resources can be found on the Somerville Food Coalition website .
10	Health - Overall	By most key metrics Somerville is healthier than most American cities
10	Health - Disparities	There is significant variation by neighborhood. Three neighborhoods 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.
10	Health - Mental	more than 1 in 3 adults (38%) and nearly half of youth (45%) in communities surveyed by the Cambridge Health Alliance report high or very high levels of mental health distress.
11	Health - Substance	In 2023, while Opioid use is lower in Somerville than other cities, there were 22.5 per 100,000 opioid deaths in 2023, given the city's population of approximately 80,000 that results in 18 deaths per year. The proportion is higher among whites (25 per 100,000) than the overall population, and significantly higher among males (33.6 per 100,000) compared to females (11.3 per 100,000). These discrepancies align with national data.
11	Health - Substance	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, and that number has been rising consistently since 2020.

³ <https://www.mass.gov/lists/departments-of-transitional-assistance-caseload-by-zip-code-reports#2025-caseload-reports>

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<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-tracker-people-are-losing-food-assistance-as-the-republican-megabil>

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11	Health - Substance	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... 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
12	Health - Insurance	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
12	Health - Insurance	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%.
13	Homelessness	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.
13	Homelessness	At the Massachusetts state level, homelessness nearly doubled from 2022 to 2024 – from 15,500 to 29,360 individuals
13	Homelessness	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.
13	Homelessness	Apart from the structural issues mentioned above such as rent increases and housing shortages, 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.

13	Homelessness	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.
14	Housing	Approximately twice as many units are renter-occupied than are owner occupied . That proposition is reversed for the U.S. overall and for Massachusetts.
14	Housing	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.
14	Housing	Data shows that 80% of Eviction cases are favorable to tenants , but a more complex story takes place outside the court system. 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.
14	Housing	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.
14	Housing	the 2025 Housing Report Card issued by The Boston Foundation, Boston University and Boston Indicators ranked Somerville among the top producers of new housing
14	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
15	Immigration Carousel 1	The PROTECT Act 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 law. 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).

		Read more at https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-law-about-immigration
15	Immigration Carousel 1	Massachusetts Executive Order 650, signed by Mayor Healey on January 29, 2026, limits new 287(g) agreements and other state cooperation with immigration enforcement.
15	Immigration Carousel 1	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. https://www.wbur.org/news/2026/04/01/7000-ice-arrests-massachusetts-trump
15	Immigration Carousel 1	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. https://apnews.com/article/ice-detention-facilities-expansion-warehouses-c61c3e23c4246e94a760b4d979cb9c48
16	Immigration Carousel 2	While the media has focused on ICE "raids," these are just one visible part of aggressive immigration enforcement tactics that have increased under the current administration.
16	Immigration Carousel 2	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.
16	Immigration Carousel 2	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 here: https://www.takenbyice.com/
17	Health & Environment	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.
18	Health & Housing	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.