

Common Pathways

2008

Worcester Indicators Report

Preliminary



Common Pathways

**A Coalition of
Worcester's
organizations and
residents working
together to improve the
quality of life for all
in our city.**

Letter to the Reader

Dear Worcester Residents,

We are proud to present the first Worcester Community Indicators Report compiled by Common Pathways, A Coalition of Worcester's organizations and residents working together to improve the quality of life for all in our city. The report was created in partnership with the residents of the City of Worcester who provided feedback through community forums, small group discussions, surveys and one-on-one interviews.

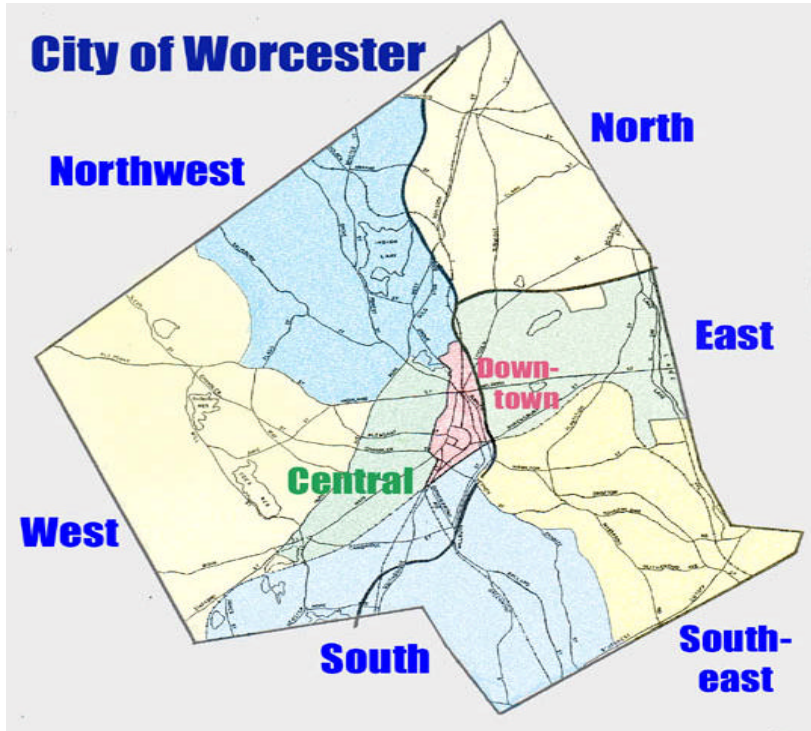
This report outlines a series of indicators that are representative of major themes, or sectors of community life. They indicate that Worcester is, relative to other cities its size, a healthy community but, also one that still has significant issues to address. The purposes of gathering data, compiling statistics, and presenting this report are to educate residents, organizations, and businesses of the City of Worcester about the sectors of our city life that create a healthy community and to motivate them to join forces to improve those factors that most affect our quality of life.

We thank you in advance for your thoughtful feedback at several planned community forums at which we will review the Worcester Community Indicators Report. We hope that you will agree that this report is an important step forward in helping all residents understand what is important in creating a healthier life for all residents of our community.

Sincerely,

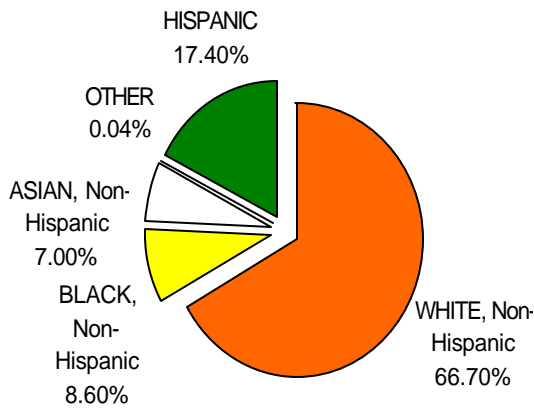
John O'Brien	John Bassett
President & CEO	President
UMass Memorial Health Care, Inc.	Clark University
Co-Chair	Co-Chair
The Community Indicators Work Group of Common Pathways	

Total Estimated Population of Worcester 179,839

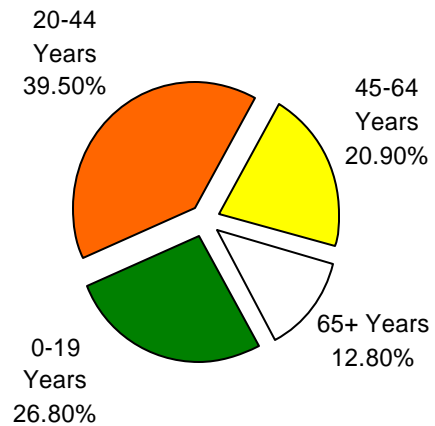


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health 2000-2005 Population

Percent of Total Estimated Population By Race/Ethnicity



Percent of Total Estimated Population By Age



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health 2000-2005 Population Estimates

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What are the purposes and goals of the Worcester Community Indicators Report?

The purpose of the Indicators Report is to stimulate discussion and create action steps to improve the quality of life in our city.

The goals of the Indicators Report are:

- To make this report available, visible, widely shared, easily understood, and broadly used.
- To provide baselines and benchmarks for monitoring and measuring changes over time.
- To broaden the resident base of decision makers regarding what data are accessible, gathered and examined.
- To encourage partners to set goals, surface emergent issues, track trends, communicate implications and take action.
- To facilitate strategic planning, resource allocation, and evidence-based decision-making in the community.
- To serve as a central repository of credible and timely measures of community health and quality of life.

What is an indicator?

An indicator is a measure of quantifiable data (a number) of an issue, such as temperature. We know that a pleasant temperature for most of us is about 60 degrees Fahrenheit, but it can decrease or increase. We use this indicator everyday to dress appropriately to adjust to weather change.

There are community indicators that assesses demographic, economic, social, health and well-being factors of a community and its environment. All of us, government, businesses, organizations and residents, can use the community indicators to make good decisions as a community and to improve the quality of life for all in our City. We must work together to share the knowledge, the responsibility and the challenges, so as later to enjoy the benefits.

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Background

Where did these Community Indicators come from?

Through a broad-based community input effort, Common Pathways identified eleven initial focus areas or themes. At the **First Community FORUM** on November 15, 2005 about 150 participants responded to three basic questions:

1. *What do you like about Worcester?*
2. *What don't you like about Worcester?*
3. *How can we improve as a city?*

The answers to these questions provided valuable community input. Additional information was gathered through a series of small group discussions with community members, nearly 100 one-on-one interviews, and over 70 surveys from people who live or work in Worcester. From this community feedback we identified the **Worcester Community Indicators** and they were organized into eleven themes: Civic Engagement, Culture and Recreation, Economic Development, Education, Environment, Diversity and Multiculturalism, Housing, Public Health and Medical Services, Public Safety, Social and Mental Health Services, and Transportation.

At the **Second Community FORUM** on April 30, 2006, the eleven community indicators themes were presented, and about 150 participants in small discussion groups selected six themes as the priorities for initial attention. They are: Economic Development, Education, Housing, Public Health and Medical Services, Social and Mental Health Services and Transportation. These six indicator themes were then approved by the Common Pathways Leadership Council.

How the Worcester Community Indicators Report was developed.

An established professional researcher was commissioned to gather data about each theme. The Community Indicators work group was convened to identify key indicators for each of the six priority areas. The Workgroup reviewed the data in each of the six themes and selected indicators for the **Worcester Community Indicators Report** based on multiple factors including the availability of data presently and over time, understandability of the indicator, and relevance of the indicator for measuring achievement towards either short-term or long-term goals.

Who will Use the Worcester Community Indicators Report?

After receiving feedback at the 3rd Community Forum, the preliminary report will be reviewed, completed and edited for publishing. The final Worcester Community Indicators Report will be disseminated in the Spring of 2008. The report is intended to stimulate discussion and action by partners and residents to improve outcomes in the six priority areas. Additional data are available for individuals and groups who want more in-depth information about any of the themes.

Economic Development Indicators

I. Economic Development

The area of economic development represents factors such as employment opportunities, access to shopping, a vibrant downtown, a business friendly environment, the absence of abandoned commercial and residential buildings, and a strong commercial tax base.

The economic development indicators selected are:

1. Unemployment rate and net job growth
2. Poverty measure- % of population below the federal poverty level
3. Number of vacant residential and commercial buildings
4. Changes in commercial/ residential tax base and total tax base

Why this matters:

A healthy economy is the foundation for a high quality of life in any community or even in an individual family. Beginning with one person's ability to find a job, and spanning to an industry's ability to respond to forces of change, the economy can set the pace for our standard of living and our future. A strong economy can also provide a sense of security as it helps us balance our family's multiple needs and enables us to enjoy a good life. When jobs are unavailable, a community risks losing its young talent and has difficulty attracting new workers. Rising unemployment and low wage rates (reflected in poverty level measures) are indicative of people's inability to meet their most basic needs.

1. Indicator: Unemployment Rate in 2005

? Between 1996 and 2005, Worcester's unemployment rate increased by 23.4%. While this represents a greater rate of increase than experienced in comparable cities, Worcester's actual rate of unemployment in 2005 was slightly lower than Boston's and substantially lower than that of Springfield, Hartford and Providence.

Unemployment rate in Massachusetts, Worcester and comparable cities in 2005

Massachusetts	Worcester	Westborough	Boston	Springfield	Hartford CT	Providence RI
5%	4.6%	3.7%	4.7%	6.3%	9.8%	6.7%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed individuals as a percent of the total labor force ages 16 and over

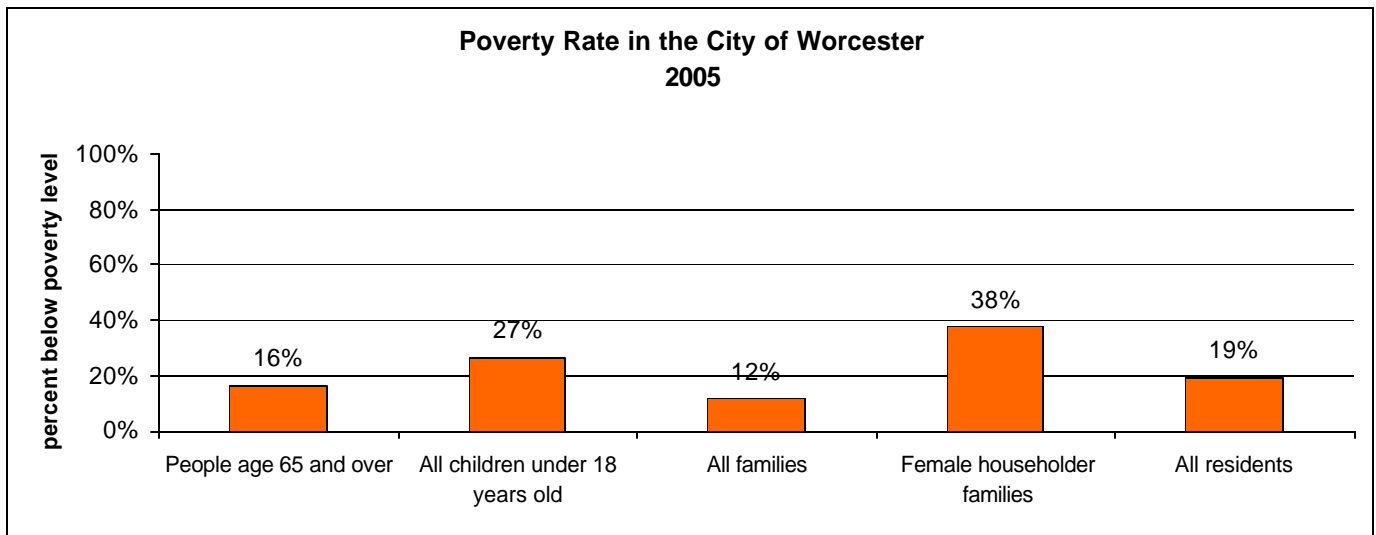
? Between 2001 and 2005 the city of Worcester lost approximately 3,300 jobs. Worcester's total population rose during this period as did the rate of unemployment. Worcester lost 1.2% of its jobs whereas jobs in the towns of Westborough, Southborough and Northborough, key towns in the I-495 belt, increased by 2.5%. (Source: the Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Economic Development Indicators

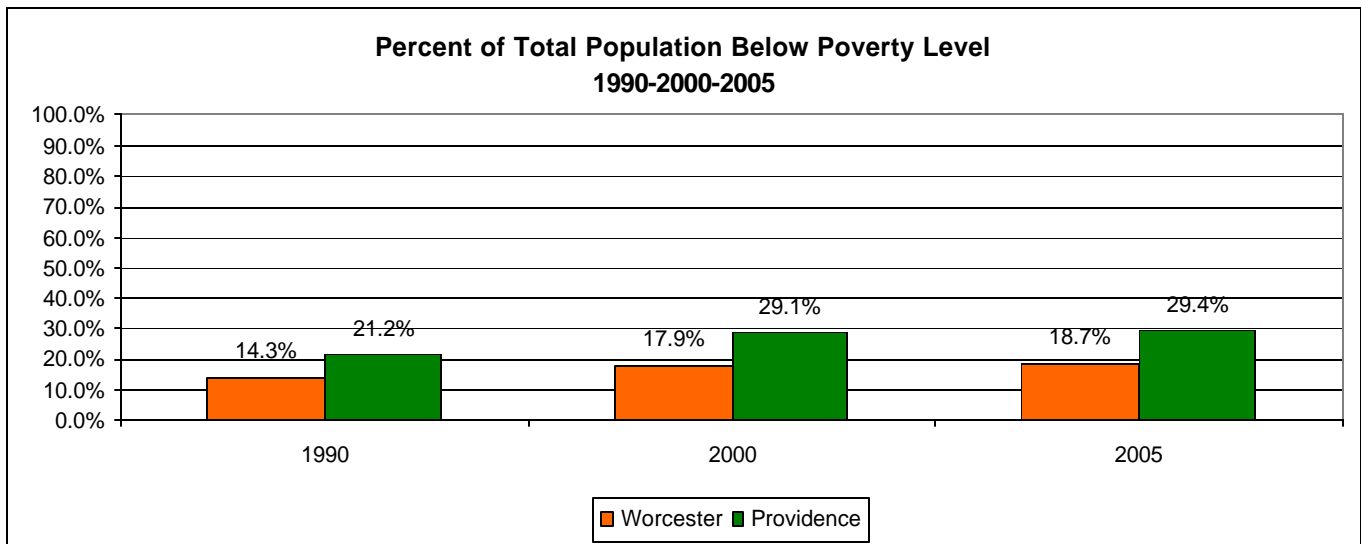
2. Indicator: Poverty Status “Who is poor in Worcester?”

? In 2005 19% of people living in the city of Worcester were living below the poverty rate. Federal poverty levels are set at about \$9,973 for an individual and about \$15,577 for a family of three. Of those living below the poverty level, 27% were “all children under 18 years old” compared with 16% of “people 65 years old and over”. 12% of all families and 38% of families with a female householder and no husband present had incomes below the poverty level.

Source: US Census, Data Set: American Community Survey, 2005



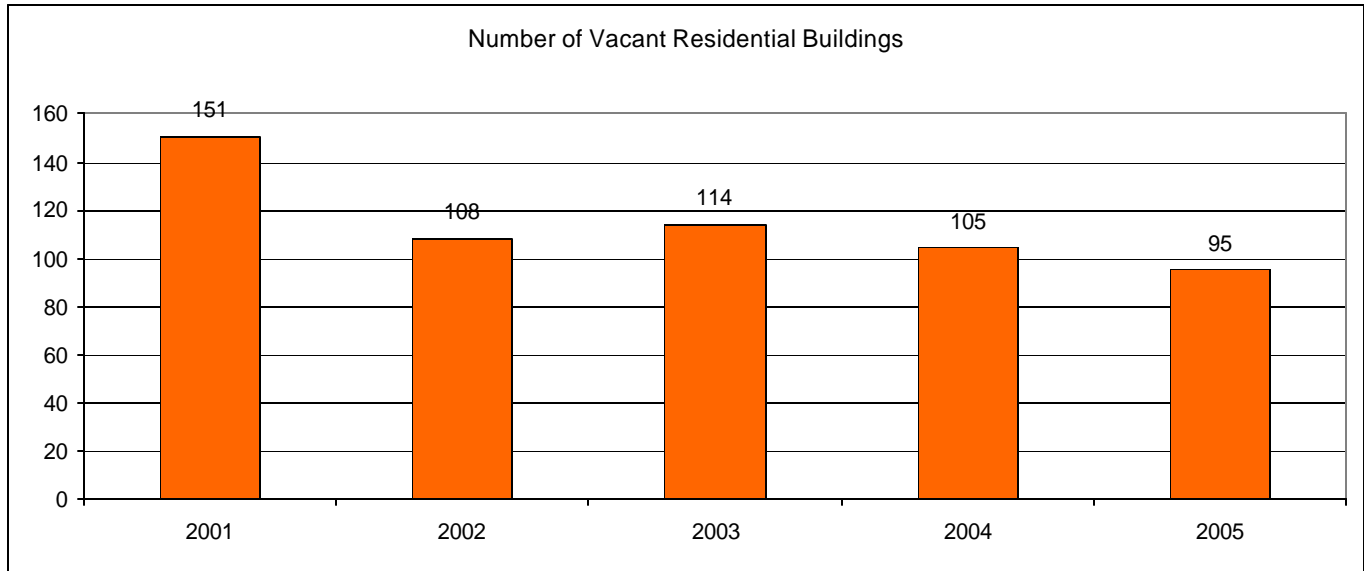
Source: US Census, Data Set: American Community Survey, 2005



? In general, the percentage of people living below the federal poverty level is less in Worcester than in Providence

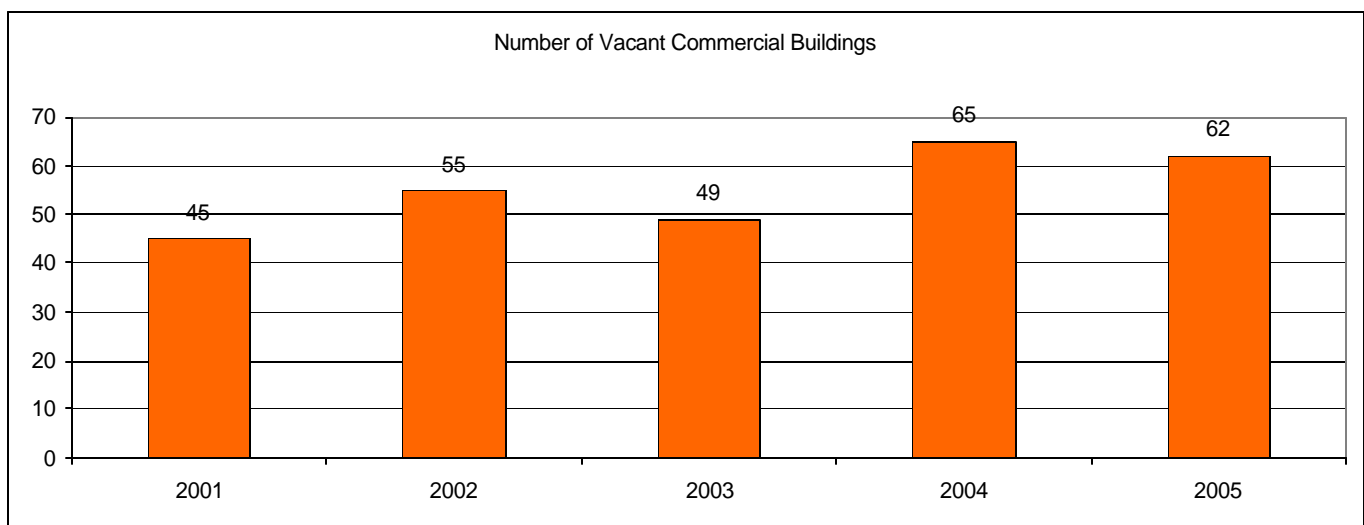
Economic Development Indicators

3. Indicator: Number of vacant residential and commercial buildings



Source: Department of Public Health Code Enforcement (2001), City of Worcester Fire Department (2002- 2005) via the Worcester Regional Research Bureau. Data reflects a point in time count of vacant buildings. Vacancy is defined as residential space that is vacant and available for lease.

? On average, between 2002 and 2005 there were 105 vacant residential buildings in Worcester. This is substantially lower than the 151 vacant residential buildings in 2001.

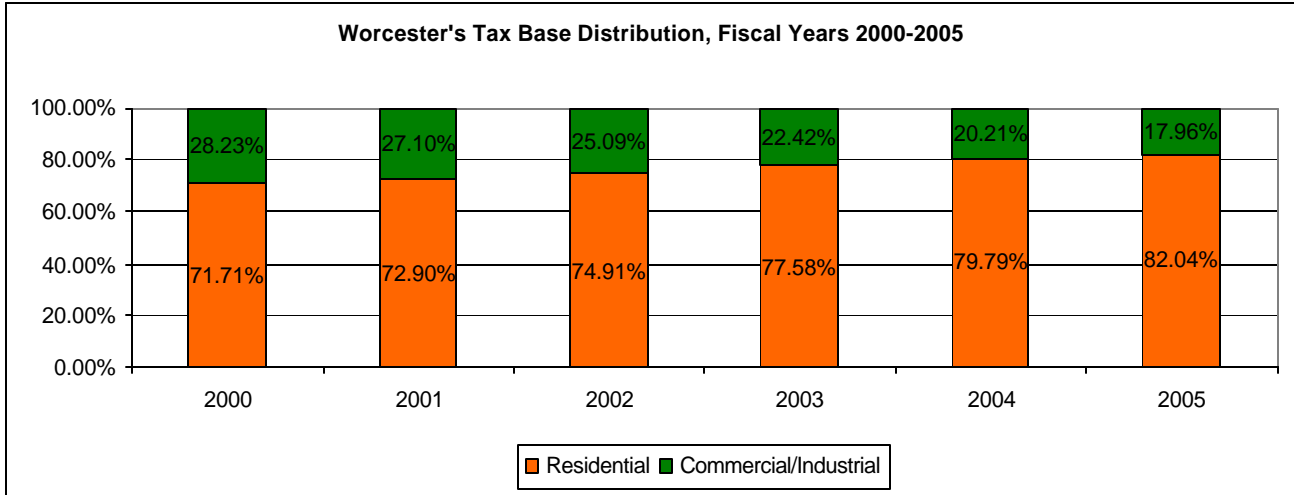


Source: Department of Public Health Code Enforcement (2001), City of Worcester Fire Department (2002- 2005) via the Worcester Regional Research Bureau. Data reflects a point in time count of vacant buildings. Vacancy is defined as commercial space that is vacant and available for lease.

? The number of vacant commercial buildings in Worcester was 45 in 2001 and more than that in each subsequent year, with 62 vacant commercial buildings in 2005.

Economic Development Indicators

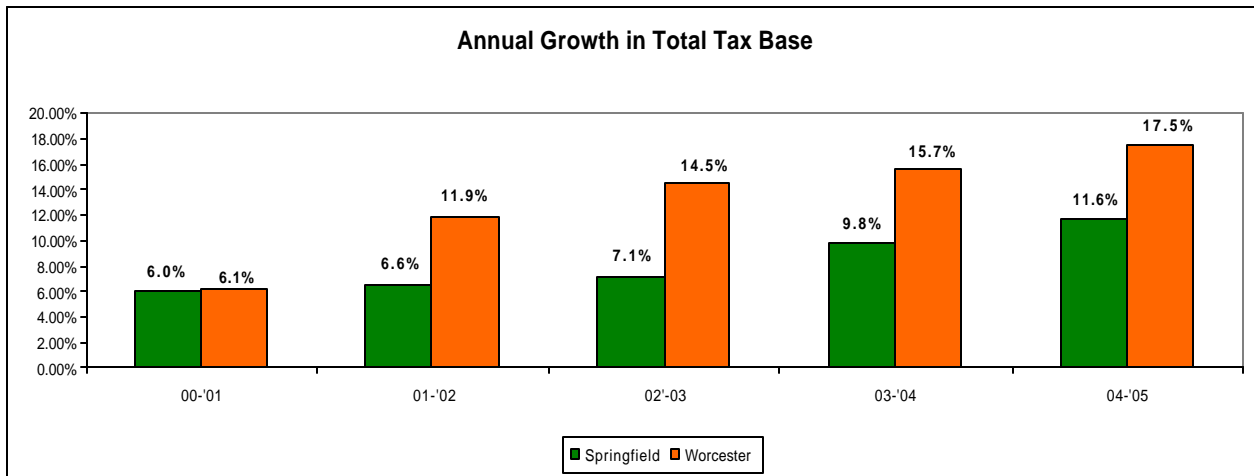
4. Indicator: Changes in the commercial tax base and total tax base



Source: *Benchmarking Municipal Finance in Worcester: Factors Affecting the City's Bond Rating*. The Research Bureau, Report 07-02, May 22, 2007

? The commercial tax base in Worcester decreased from 28% of the total tax base in 2000 to 18% of the total tax base in 2005.

Indicator: Changes in the total tax base, Worcester compared to Springfield



Source: *Measures of Economic Success: Springfield vs. Worcester* Worcester Regional Research Bureau

? Compared to Springfield, Worcester consistently has a greater annual growth in total tax base. In fiscal years 04-05, Worcester's total tax base grew by 17.5% compared to 11.6% in Springfield. Much of the increase is attributed to an increase in residential property values.

Education Indicators

II. Education

The area of education includes preschool, K-12, post-secondary education, lifelong learning, and English as a Second Language.

The education indicators selected are:

1. Percentage of 4th and 10th graders who are proficient in English Language Arts based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
2. Percentage of 4th and 10th graders who are proficient in Math based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)
3. Four-year graduation rates
4. Four-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity
5. Percent of public high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education
6. Number of people waiting to enroll in English as a Second Language Program
7. Percent of early childhood education students who receive services from accredited agencies and staff

Why this matters:

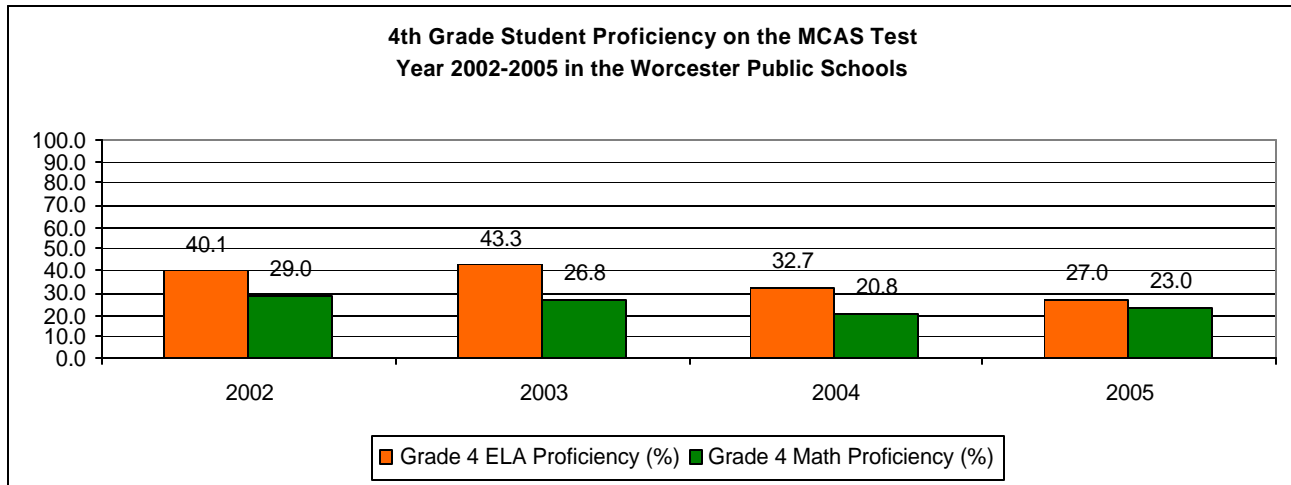
A community's prosperity depends on a well-educated work force. After the family, education is the most pervasive component in children's growth and development. Education offers the greatest potential for a community's economic advancement, upward mobility and economic and social vitality. Children who arrive in school ready to learn are more likely to experience academic success. "Many studies indicate that high-quality early childhood education programs help young children succeed in school. Children's development is enhanced and school readiness increases when programs are accredited, employ staff with bachelor's or master's degrees in education and keep staff turnover low."

Source: Department of Early Education and Care, [Strategies for Children](#)

As completion of secondary education has become insufficient for success in the new economy, life-long learning has been recognized as key to individuals' and communities' long term growth and vitality. If a community has a poor quality public education system, residents are unable to achieve their academic potential and effectively participate in the workforce. Those who fail to complete high school face diminishing opportunities and a lifetime of financial struggle and are less likely to have health insurance and live a long life. Families looking for good schools for their children however, can be deterred from living there and businesses seeking communities where they will be able to recruit a talented workforce are inclined to look elsewhere.

Education Indicators

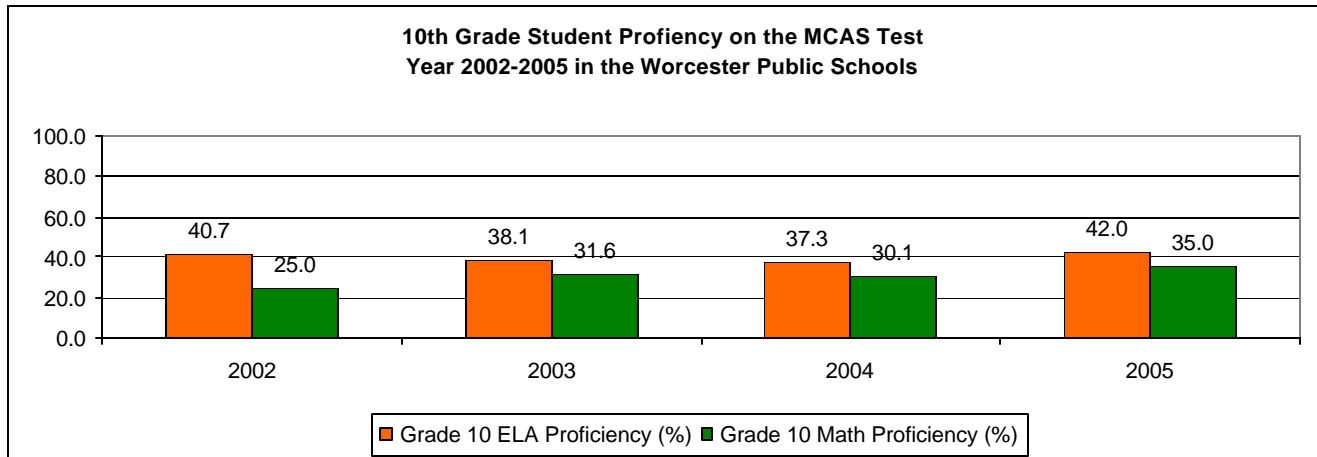
1. Indicator: Percentage of 4th grade students who are proficient in English Language Arts and Math based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

? From 2002 to 2005, the percentage of 4th graders who were proficient in the MCAS English Language Arts decreased from 40.1% to 27% in 2005; Proficiency in MCAS Math decreased from 29% to 23%.

2. Indicator: Percentage of 10th grade students who are proficient in English Language Arts and Math based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

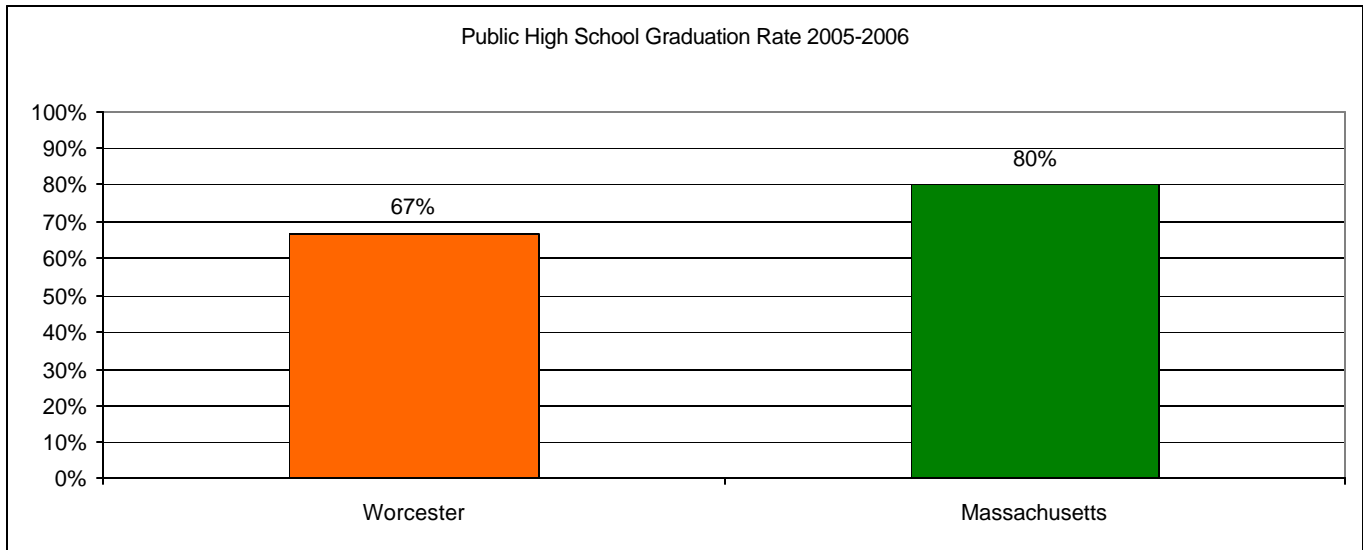


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

? From 2002 to 2005, on average, 40% of 10th graders were proficient in the MCAS English Language Arts and 30% were proficient in the MCAS Math.

Education Indicators

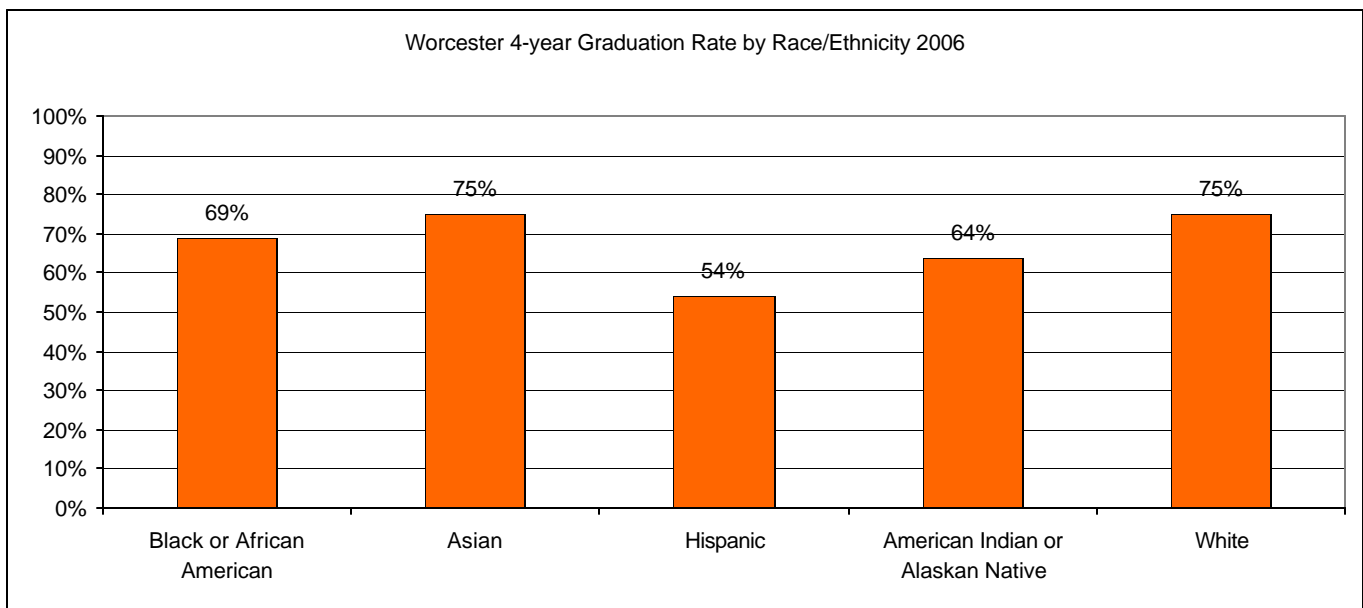
3. Indicator: Four-year graduation rates



Source: MA Department of Education. The Four-year graduation rate describes the percentage of 9th graders who graduate from high school four years later.

? The four-year graduation rate in Worcester is lower than the state as a whole, 67% compared to 80% across Massachusetts.

4. Indicator: Four-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity

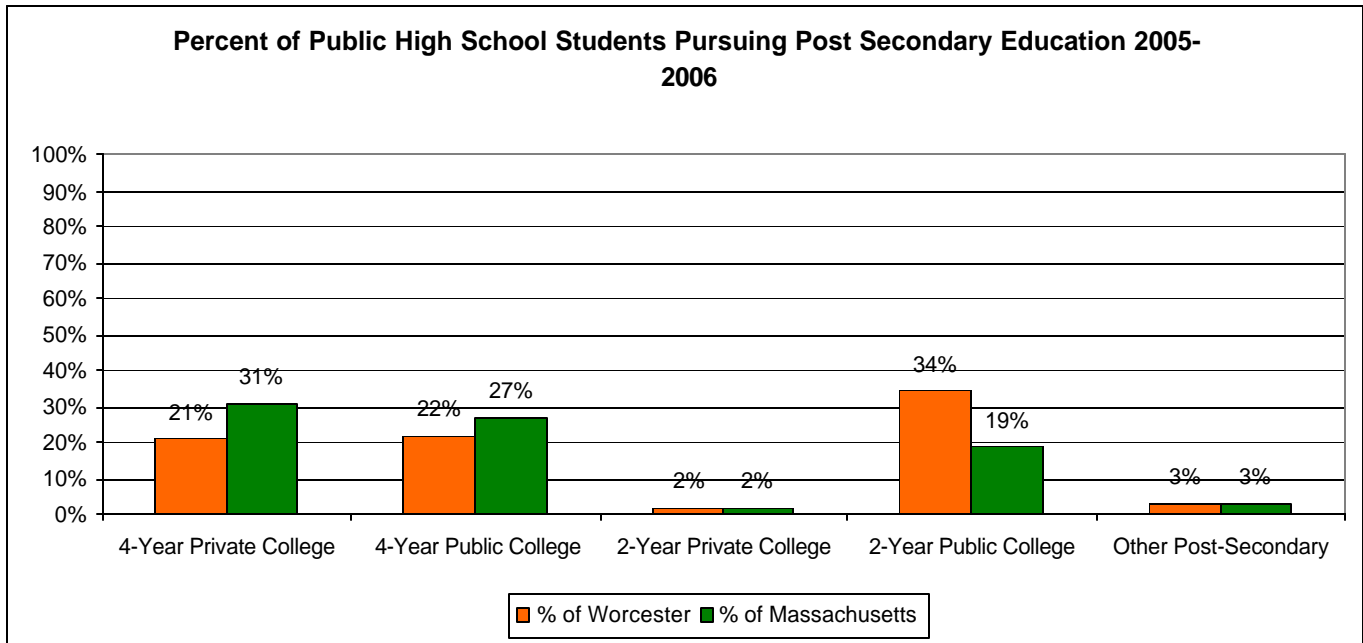


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

? The four-year graduation rate in Worcester varies substantially among different racial and ethnic groups.

Education Indicators

5. Indicator: Percent of high school students pursuing post-secondary education



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

? The same percentage of high school students in Worcester pursue college* as compared to high school students across the state. However, fewer of these high school students from Worcester pursue 4-year colleges and more pursue 2-year colleges compared to the state as a whole. (* This includes public and private, 4-year and 2-year colleges)

6. Indicator: Number of people waiting to enroll in ESOL and ABE classes

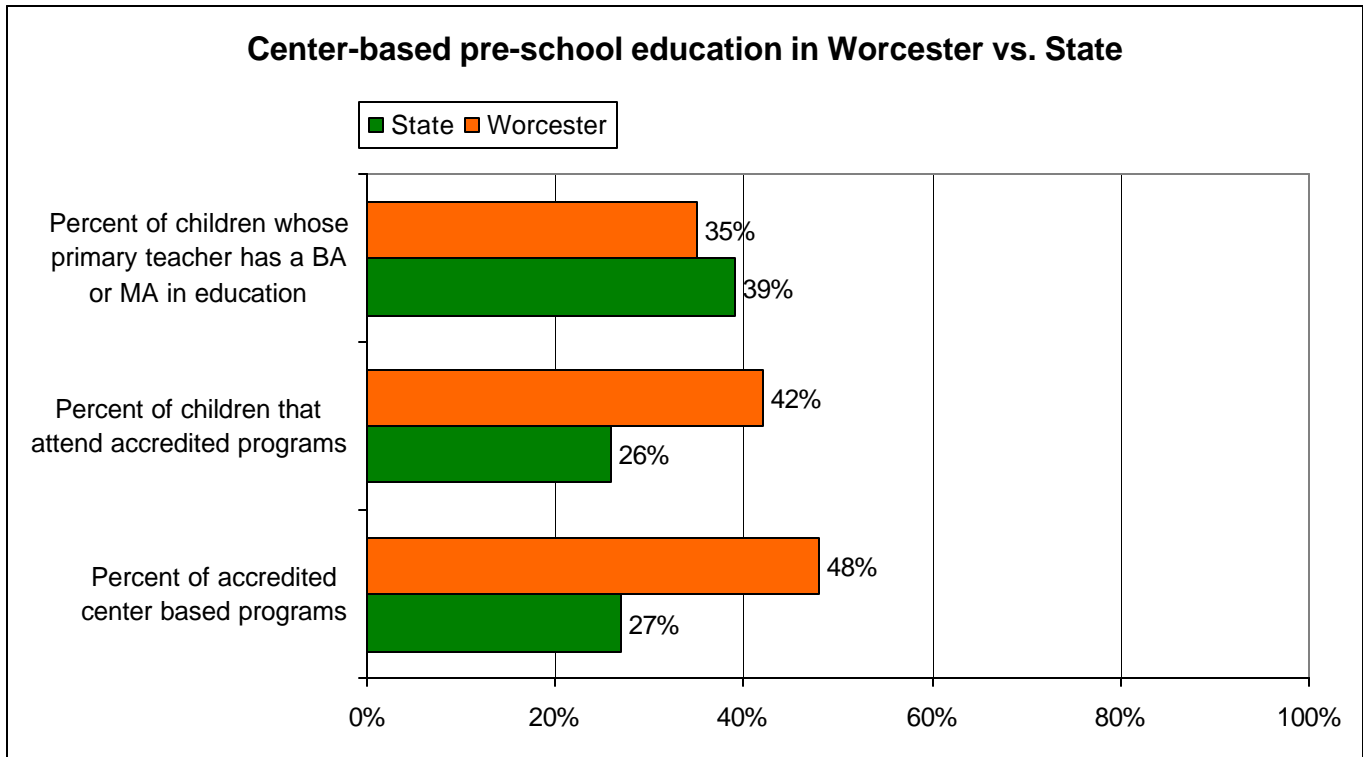
Data are available for the number of adults in Massachusetts who currently are on waiting lists for Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, General Educational Development programs (GED) and adult basic education (non-reader to pre-GED). ABE programs are for adults who lack high school-level skills and include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Approximately 25,000 adults are currently enrolled in ABE programs funded by the Mass. of Department of Education and 23,266 adults currently are on waiting lists (non-duplicated count).

? Nearly 50% of adults who try to enroll in ABE services each year cannot enroll because there aren't enough slots. (Source: Massachusetts Dept. of Education, Oct 2006)

? Waiting lists vary from 2 to 8 months for ABE and 6 months to 2 years for ESOL. (Source: Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education)

Education Indicators

7. Indicator: Percent of early childhood education students who receive services from accredited agencies and staff



Source: Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, *Early Childhood Indicators by Town Part 1*, March 18, 2004 report

? Compared to the state as a whole, Worcester fares far better in the percent of center-based pre-school programs that are accredited (48% in Worcester compared to 27% in the state), in the percent of children that attend accredited programs (42% in Worcester compared to 26% in the state), and Worcester is close to the statewide average in the percent of children whose primary pre-school teacher has a BA or MA in education (35% in Worcester compared to 39% statewide).

Housing Indicators

III. Housing

The area of housing includes affordability, safety and availability of housing.

The housing indicators selected are:

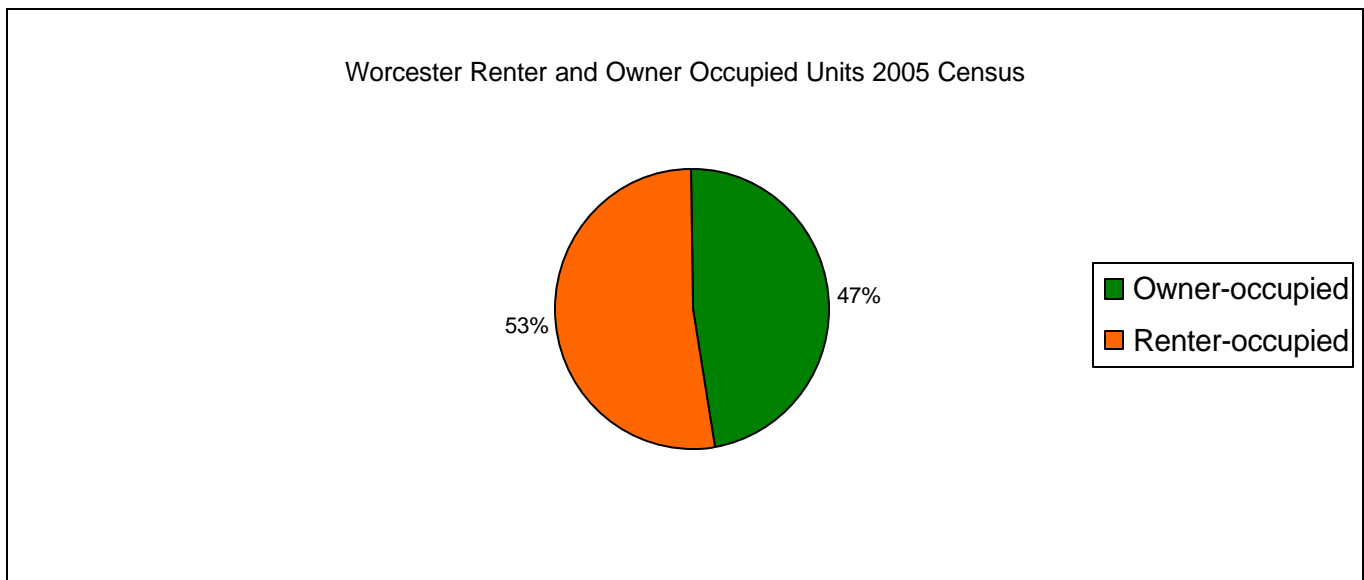
1. Percent of owner occupied units compared to percent of renter occupied units
2. Percent of households paying greater than 30 percent of income on housing
3. Number of individuals and families who are homeless

Why this matters:

Housing is the cornerstone of a strong community. Affordable, secure housing ensures the stabilization of neighborhoods, decreases student mobility in schools and reduces the need for services and the number of homeless and under-housed residents. Vibrant, stable neighborhoods contribute positively to the local economy and civic life.

Families that have to pay a high percentage of their income for housing have little left over for other basic necessities, such as food, clothing, medical care, recreation, and utilities. When affordable housing is unavailable, families are unable to live and work in the same community.

1. Indicator: Percent of owner occupied units and percent of renter occupied units

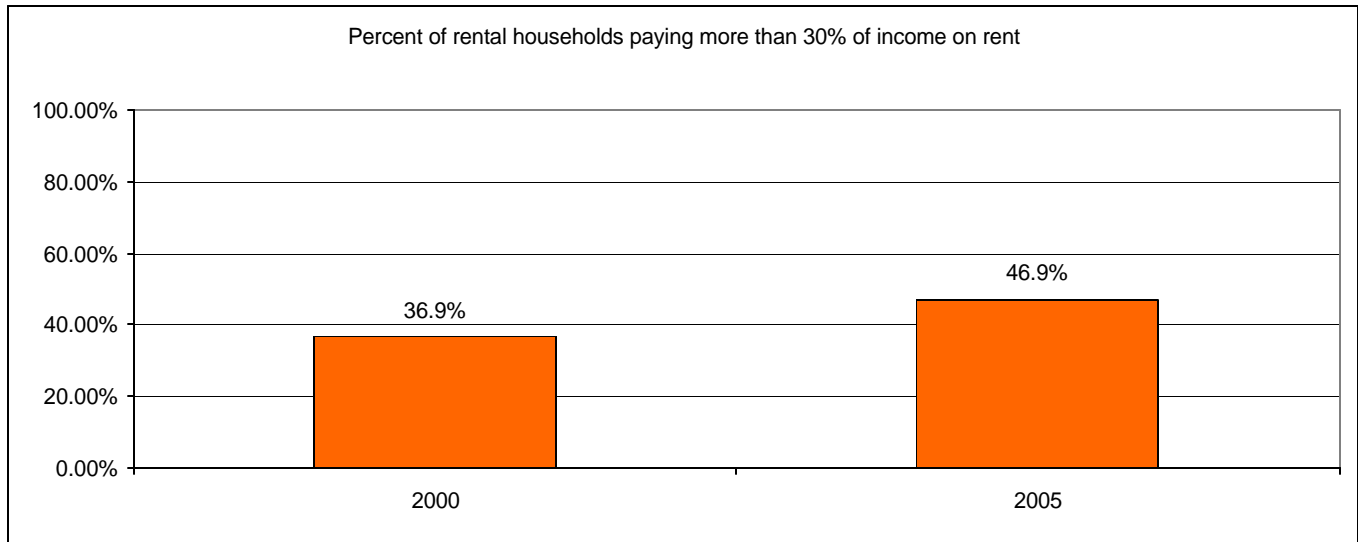


Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2005

? Almost half of all housing units in Worcester are owner-occupied and slightly more than half are renter-occupied.

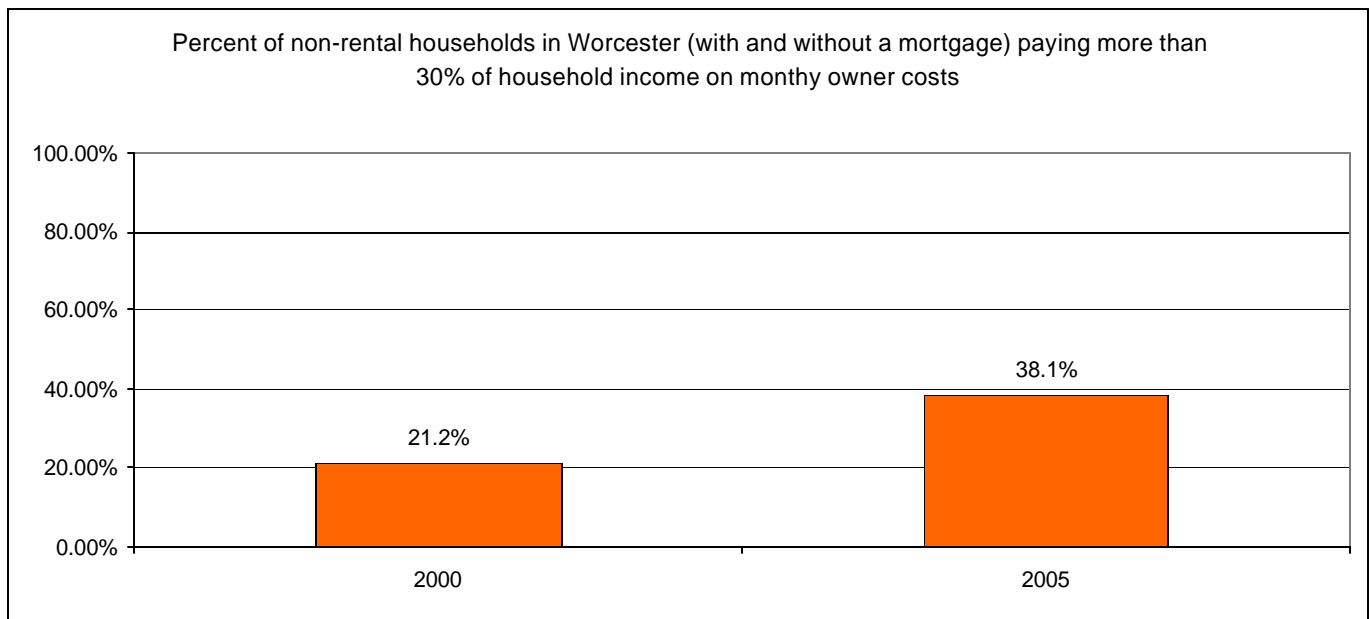
Housing Indicators

2. Indicator: Percent of households in Worcester paying greater than 30 percent of income on housing



Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2005

? The percent of rental households in Worcester paying more than 30% of their income on rent has increased by almost a third between 2000 and 2005.

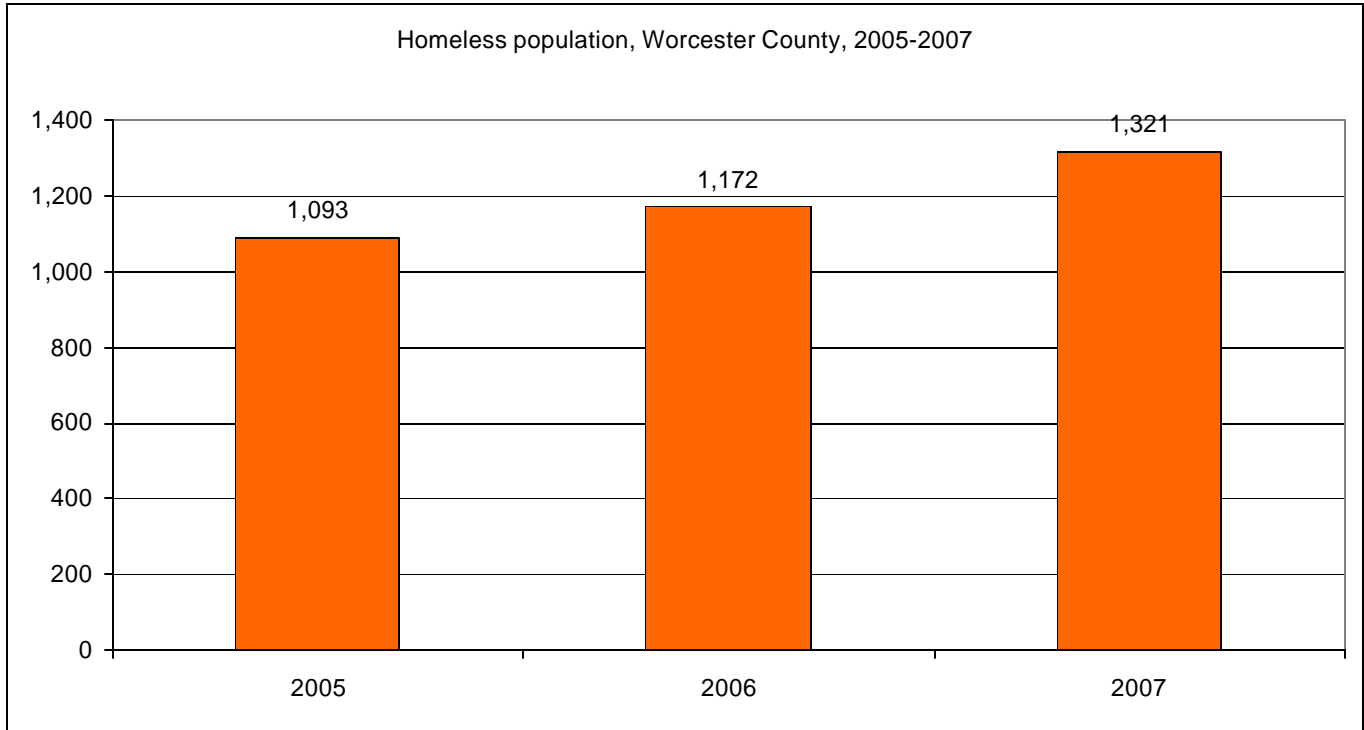


Source: US Census, American Community Survey 2005

? The percent of non rental households in Worcester with and without a mortgage paying more than 30% of household income on monthly owner costs has almost doubled between 2000 and 2005.

Housing Indicators

3. Indicator: Number of individuals and families who are homeless



Source: Worcester County, Point in Time Surveys, FORM HUD 40076 CoC-H page 1

? From 2005 to 2007, Worcester County had an increase in the number of individuals who were homeless and individuals who were part of families with children who were homeless.

Public Health and Medical Services Indicators

IV. Public Health and Medical Services

The area of Public Health and Medical Services includes the availability of and access to medical facilities, the quality of services, and health-insurance coverage.

The indicators selected for this area are:

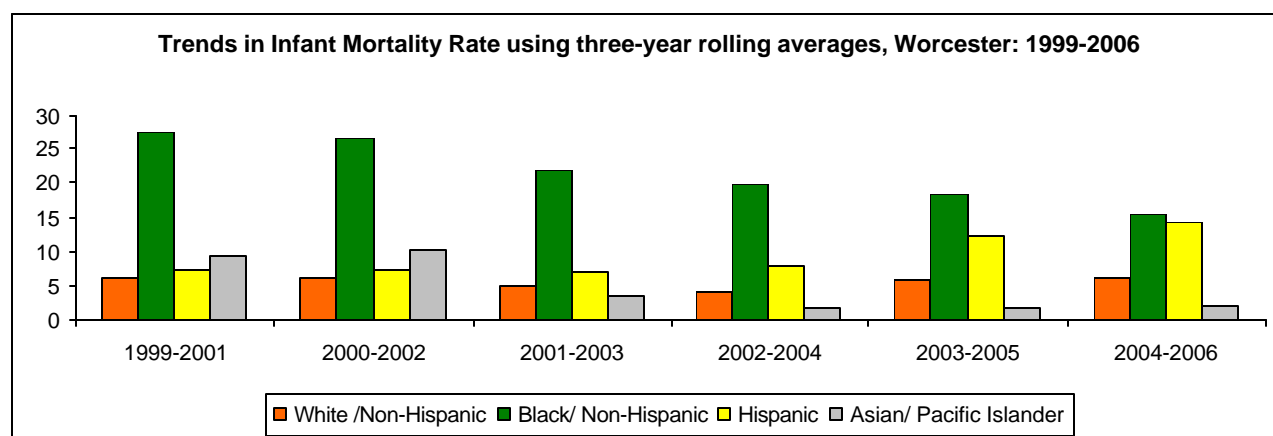
1. Infant mortality rates
2. Percent of third grade students with at least one untreated dental cavity, Worcester County
3. Tobacco use among youth and adults
4. Percentage of adults who are overweight or obese by race and ethnicity
5. Rate of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS in Worcester compared to the state by race and ethnicity
6. Sexually transmitted infections among youth

Why this matters:

A community's vitality is closely related to its residents' health status. A healthy community invests in the well-being of its residents by providing access to healthy lifestyle choices such as fresh produce, recreation, medical facilities, and clean air. It also provides access to high quality health care and ensures all residents have adequate health care coverage. Communities with a high percentage of unhealthy residents suffering from chronic diseases like asthma, diabetes, obesity, drug addiction, and HIV experience a drain on their limited resources and a diminished quality of life for everyone.

1. Indicator: Number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births in Worcester

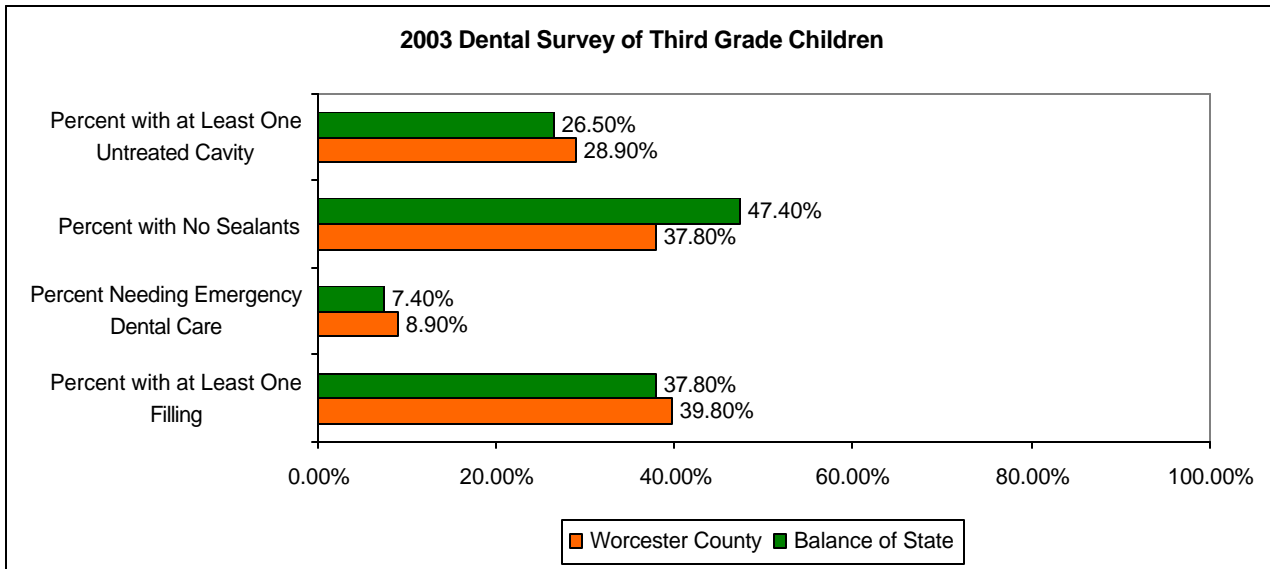
Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Number of infant deaths per 1000 live births



? The infant mortality rate in Worcester has fluctuated since 1999 to 2006. In 2005, the rate was 13.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, representing 36 deaths, compared to a rate of 5.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in Massachusetts as a whole. There is a decrease among the African American community, but we still have a challenge to focus on.

Public Health and Medical Services Indicators

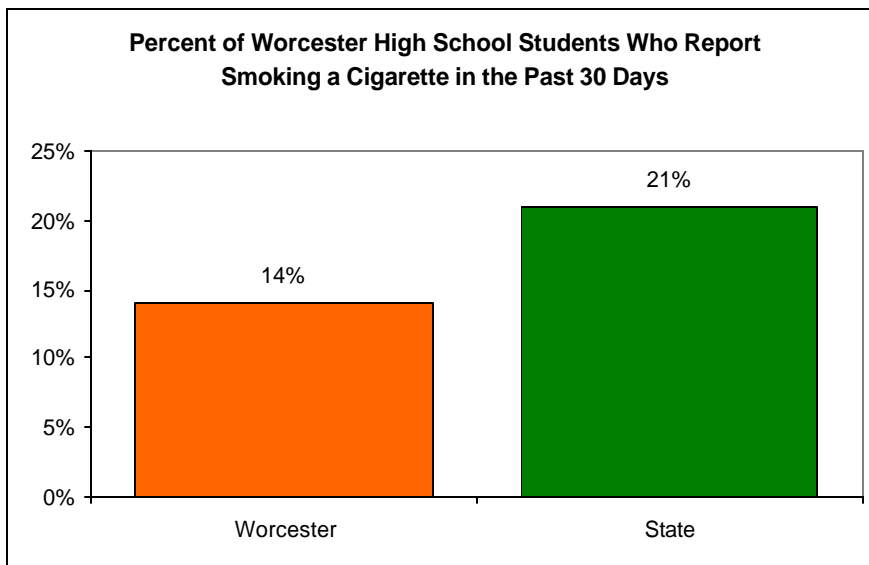
2. Indicator: Percent of 3rd grade students with at least 1 untreated dental cavity, in Worcester County



Source: Massachusetts, Spring 2003 Dental Survey, The Central Massachusetts Oral Health Initiative Evaluation Report

? Third grade students in Worcester County show signs of a lack of preventative dental care when compared to the state average in all categories.

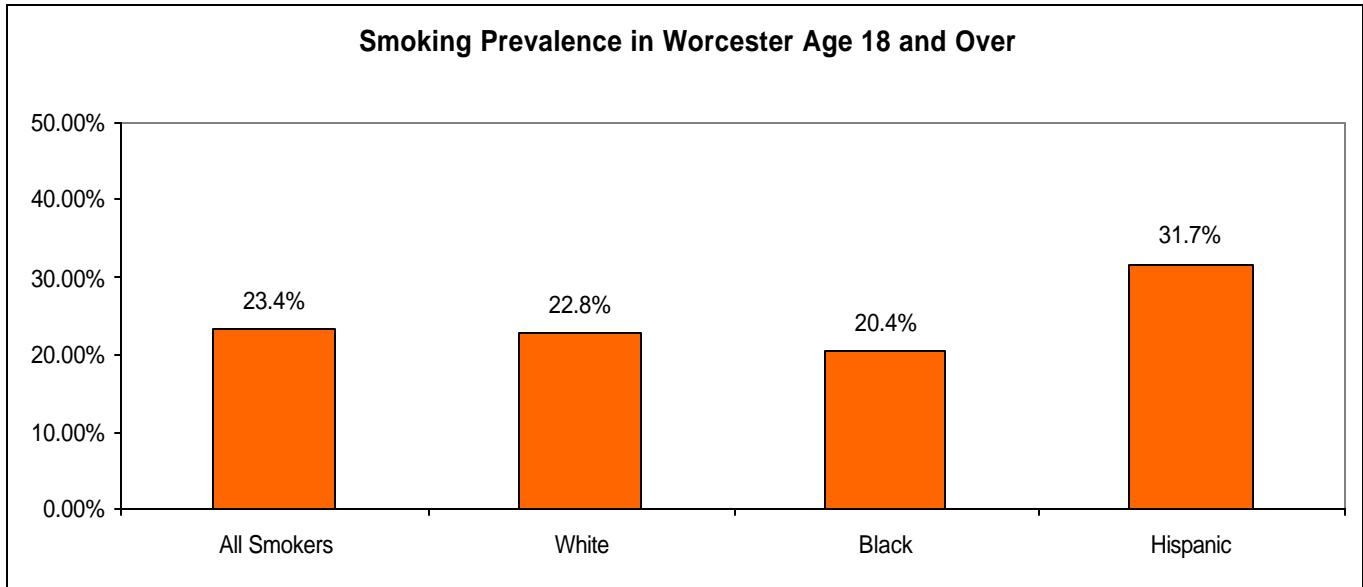
3. Indicator: Tobacco use among youth and adults



Source: Massachusetts 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

? According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 14% of Worcester High School students (grades 9-12) claim to have smoked a cigarette within the month prior to the survey. This is well below the state average of 21%.

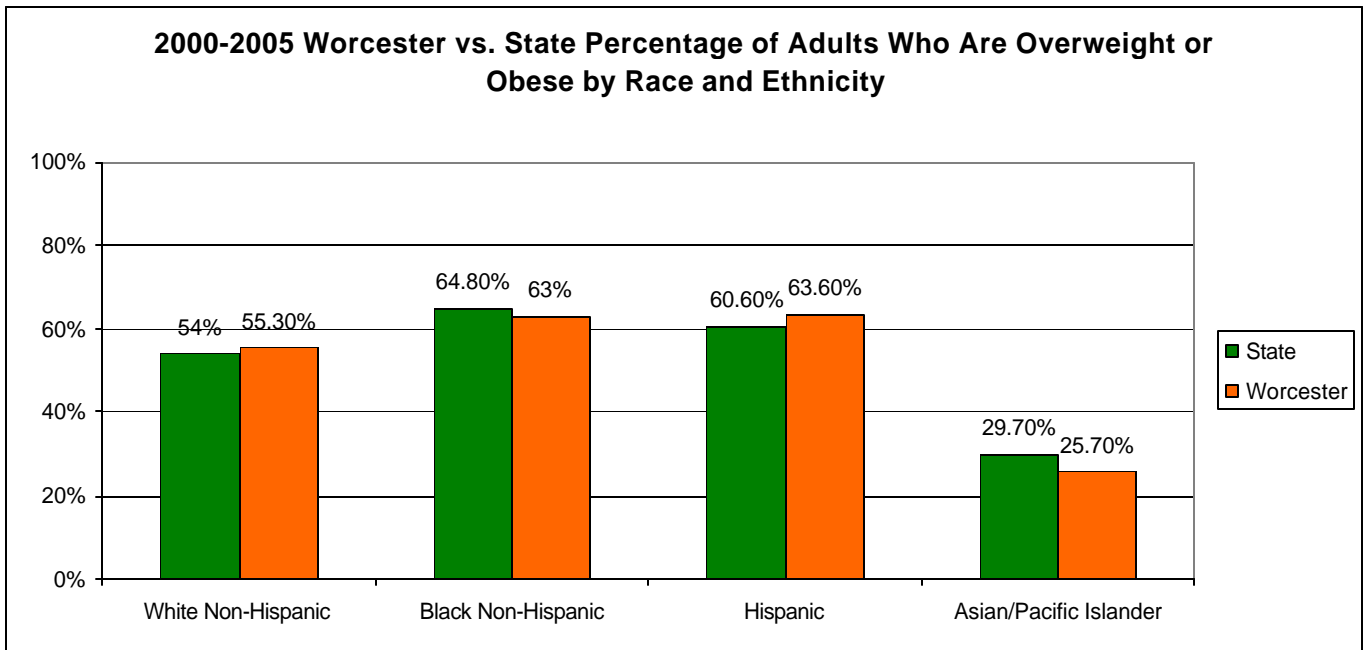
Public Health and Medical Services Indicators



Source: Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2004 to 2006, Sample size is too small for estimates of smoking prevalence for Asians.

? Roughly 23% of adults of all races in Worcester smoke cigarettes. Of the race and ethnic groups identified, Hispanic adults have the highest smoking rate of 31.7 %.

4. Indicator: Percentage of adults who are overweight or obese

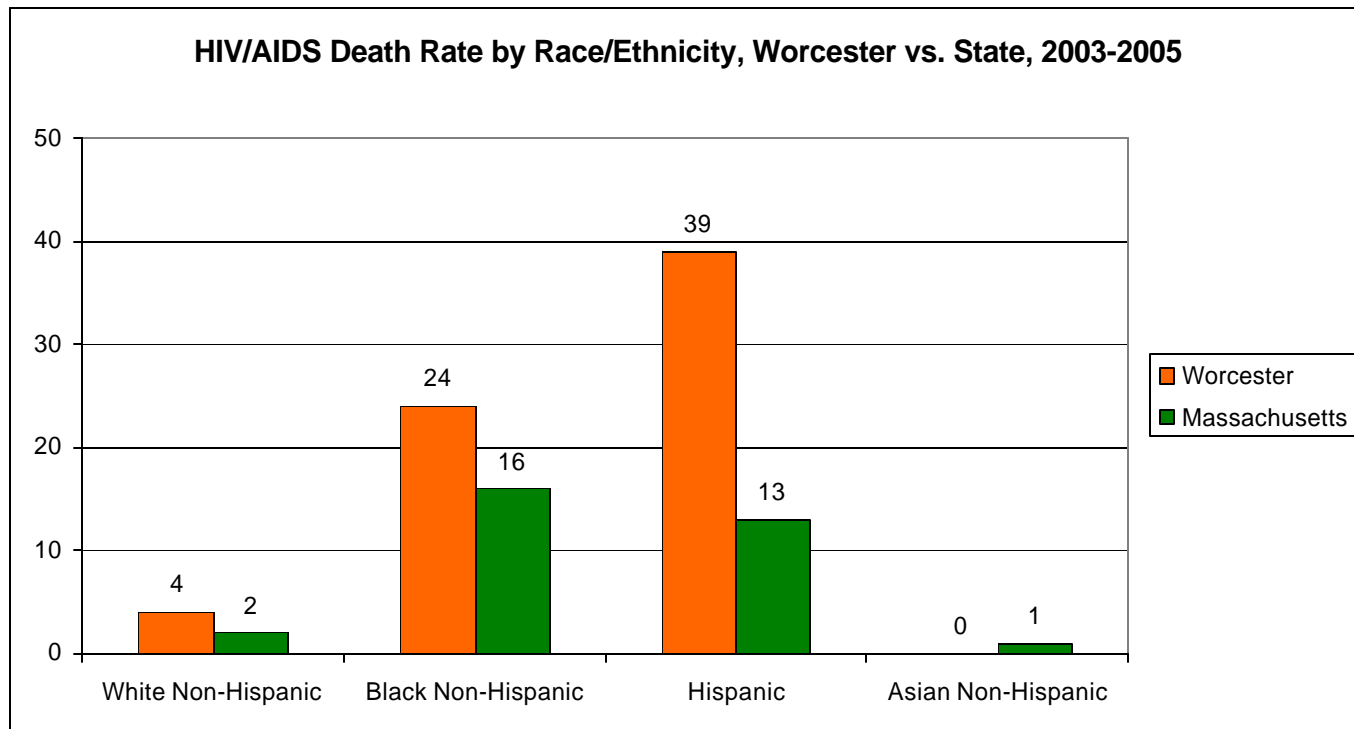


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, MassCHIP: Community Health Information Profile, 2000-2005

? More than 55% of White, Black and Hispanic individuals in Worcester are either overweight or obese, similar to statewide averages. Among the four race and ethnic groups identifies, Asian/Pacific Islanders are least likely to be overweight or obese.

Public Health and Medical Services Indicators

5. Indicator: Rate of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS in Worcester

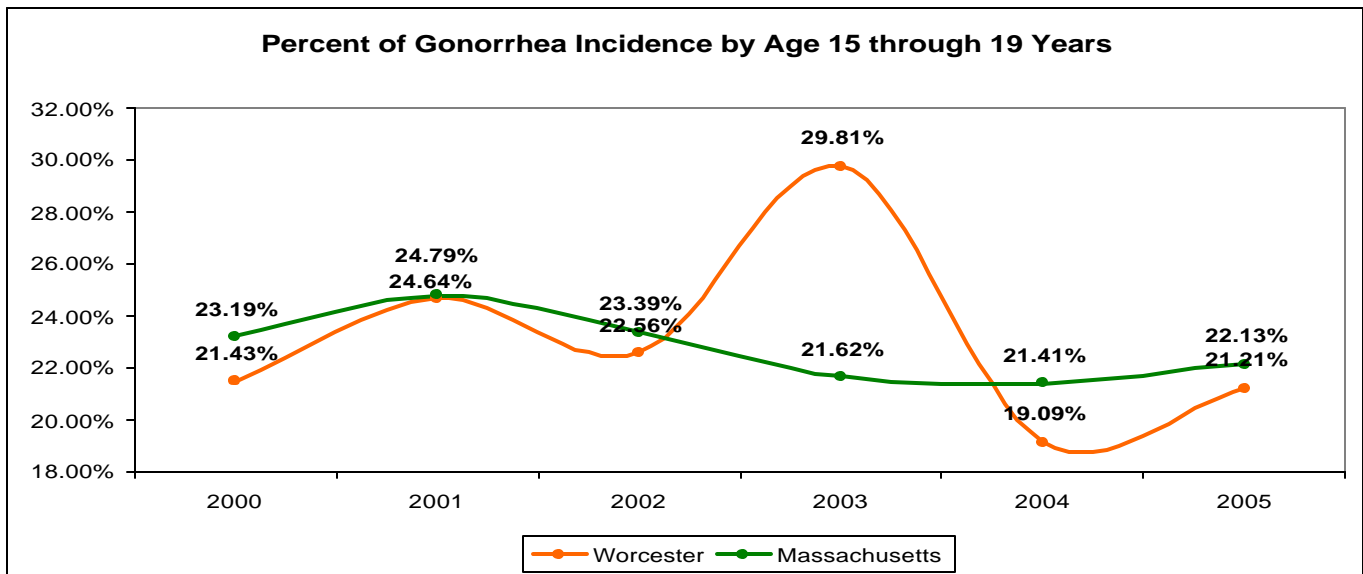
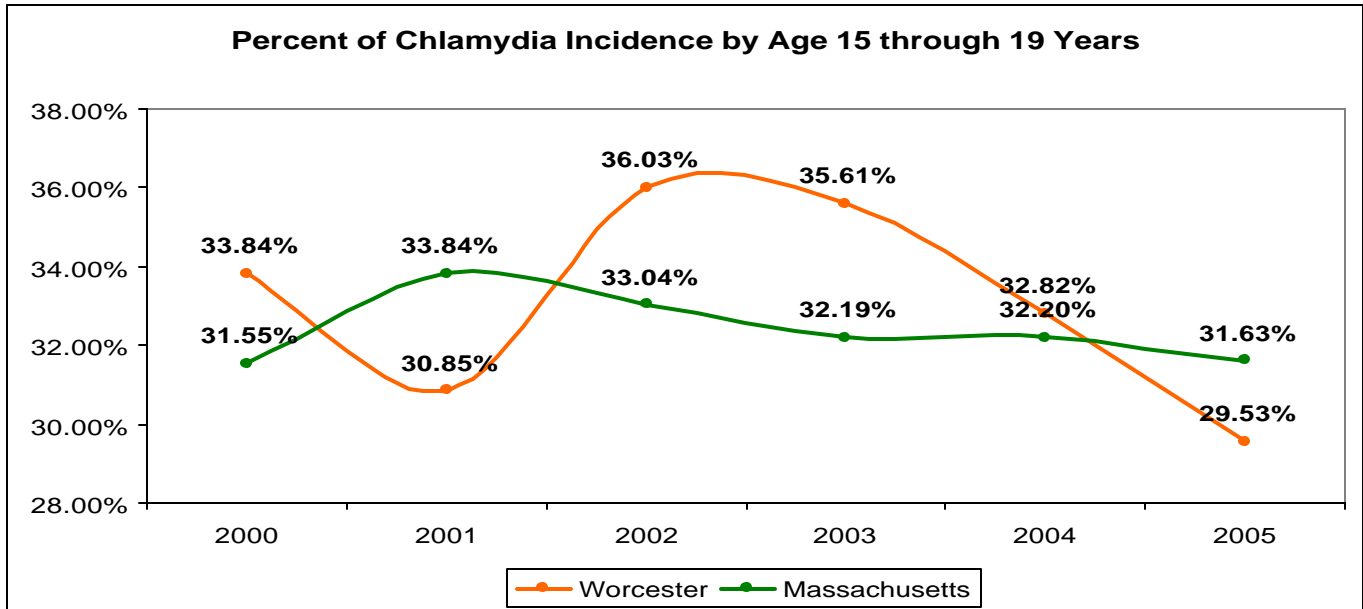


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Death rate is per 100,000 persons. Rates presented are age-adjusted to the 2000 US Standard Population.

? In Worcester the death rate from HIV/AIDS per 100,000 residents varies considerably by race and Hispanic ethnicity. The death rate among Hispanics in Worcester (39 deaths per 100,000 Hispanic residents) is far greater than the rate of death among Hispanics statewide (13 deaths per 100,000 Hispanics across the state).

Public Health and Medical Services Indicators

6. Indicator: Sexually transmitted infections among youth



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, MassCHIP: Community Health Information Profile, 2000-2005

? In Worcester, sexually transmitted diseases are still prevalent. Chlamydia and Gonorrhea are particularly affecting Worcester's youth population (15 to 19 years of age).

? Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent among 15 to 19 year olds in Worcester and statewide. Among all people who test positive for Chlamydia, approximately 1 in 3 are youth. Among all people who test positive for Gonorrhea, approximately 1 in 5 are youth.

Social and Mental Health Services Indicators

V. Social and Mental Health Services

This area includes the availability of and access to mental health services and social services.

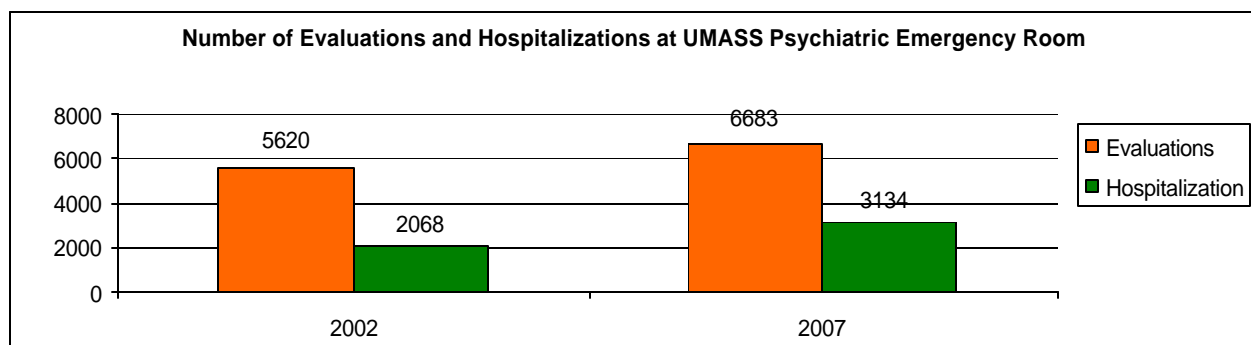
The indicators selected for this area are:

1. Number of evaluations and hospitalizations at UMASS Psychiatric Emergency Room
2. Number of emergency department visits for self inflicted injuries by age
3. Mental health symptoms among Latinos/Hispanics
4. Primary substance of use
5. Admissions to all substance abuse treatment services by race and ethnicity
6. Number of individuals and families served by hunger agencies in Worcester
7. Worcester Public Schools free or reduced lunch
8. Low Income Heating Assistance Program household totals

Why this matters:

A community's health is closely related to its residents' levels of emotional health and well-being. In a healthy community, people living and working in the community feel safe, happy and connected to neighbors, schools, and providers of social services. Providers are able to meet residents' needs for help related to emotional stress, food and housing, security, and social isolation. When these needs cannot be met, individuals are more likely to under- perform, miss days from work or school, and engage in risky behaviors. A community unable to meet its residents' social and mental health needs will likely experience disproportionately higher rates of negative outcomes such as suicide, criminal activity, homelessness, child abuse, and neglect.

1. Indicator: Number of Evaluations and Hospitalizations at UMASS Psychiatric Emergency Room



Source: Department of Psychiatric EMHS Data Base 2002-2007

? There was a 27% increase in the rate of hospitalizations (37% of all patients evaluated in 2002 compared to 47% in 2007). In five years, the total EMHS volume has risen by 1,063 evaluations, an increase of 20%.

Social and Mental Health Services Indicators

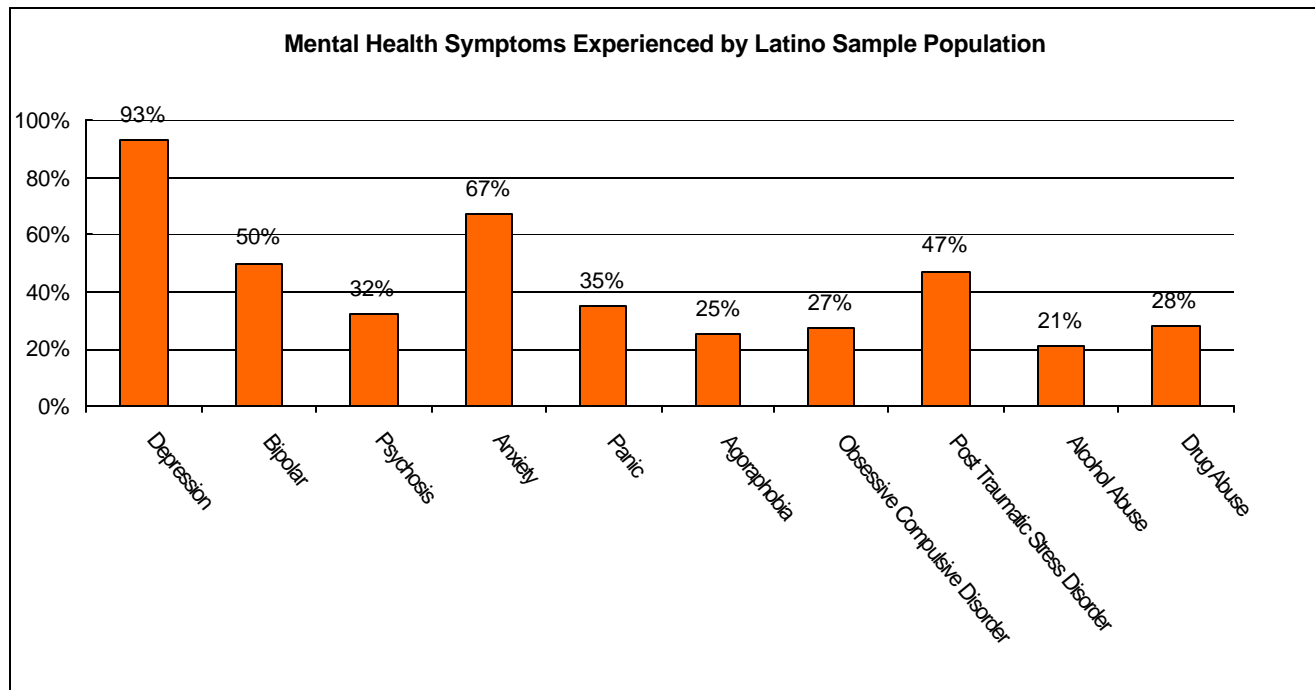
2. Indicator: Number of Emergency Department visits for self-inflicted injuries among Worcester residents, in Fiscal Year 2005 by age group

Age Group	Number of Cases	Rate per 100,000 in specified age group
10-14	22	187.12
15-19	74	516.94
20-24	51	297.10
25-64	199	217.74
65+	<5	**

Source: MA Emergency Department Discharge Database, MA Division of Health Care Finance & Policy. **Rates are not calculated on counts of <5. Rates on counts <20 may be unstable. Rate is per 100,000 residents.

? The highest rate of self-inflicted injuries treated in the emergency department in fiscal year 2005 was among youth ages 15-19 years old.

3. Indicator: Mental health symptoms among Latinos/Hispanics

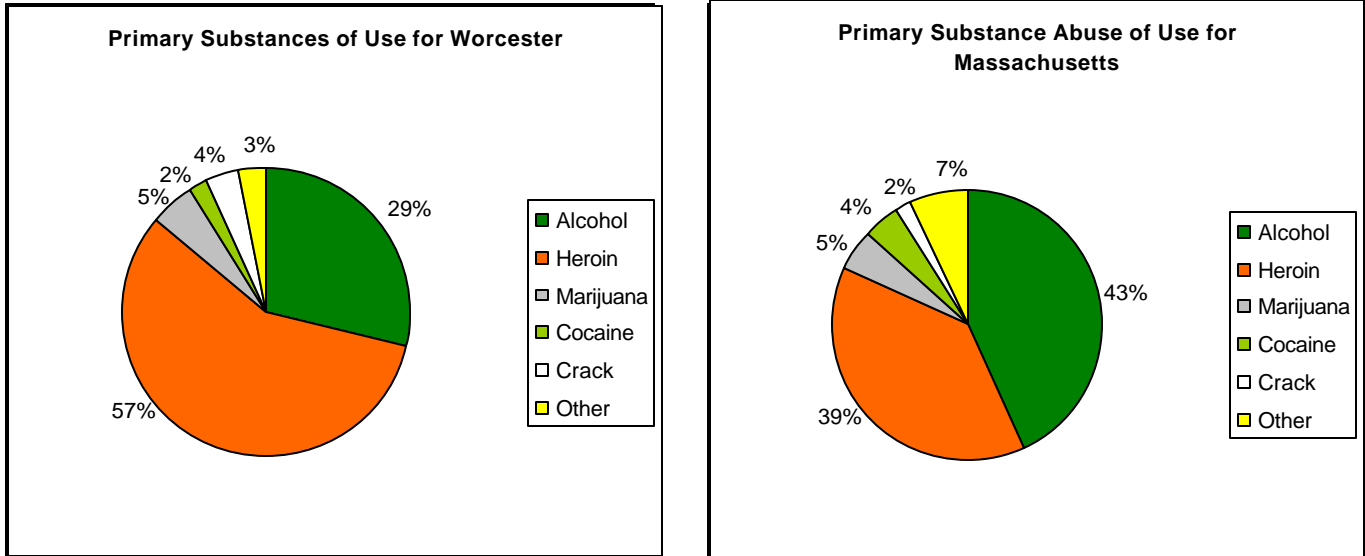


Source: The Worcester Latino Mental Health Assessment 2004-2005

? From a total of 166 Latino residents surveyed in 2005 about mental health issues in their own life or in the life of a family member, the three most reported psychological problems were depression (93%), anxiety (67%), and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (47%). (Similar data are not available for other race/ethnic groups.)

Social and Mental Health Services Indicators

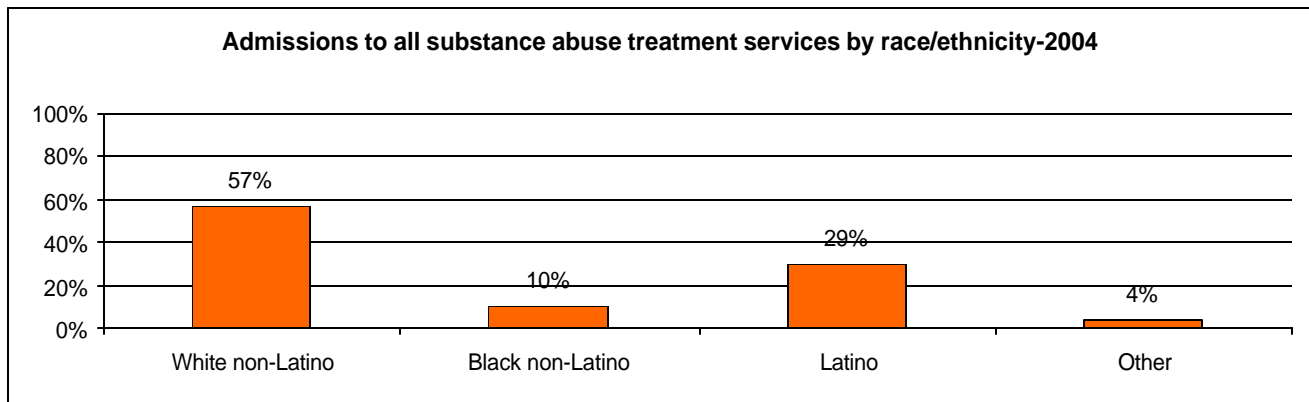
4. Indicator: Primary drug of use



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services 2004

? In 2004 the “primary drug” of use reported by substance users in Worcester was heroin (57%), compared to Massachusetts as a whole where the primary drug of use was alcohol (43%).

5. Indicator: Admissions to all substance abuse treatment services by race and Hispanic ethnicity



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services 2004

? Hispanics represent 29% of the admissions to substance abuse treatment but only 17% of the population.

Social and Mental Health Services Indicators

6. Indicator: Number of individuals and families served by hunger agencies in Worcester in 2006

? Hunger agencies in Worcester report that they provided over 709,576 meals for 35,210 individuals (over 26,000 families) in 2006.

? According to 38 agencies served by Rachel’s Table (food distribution services), 93% of soup kitchens and food pantries saw an increase in the numbers of families with children requiring food aid.

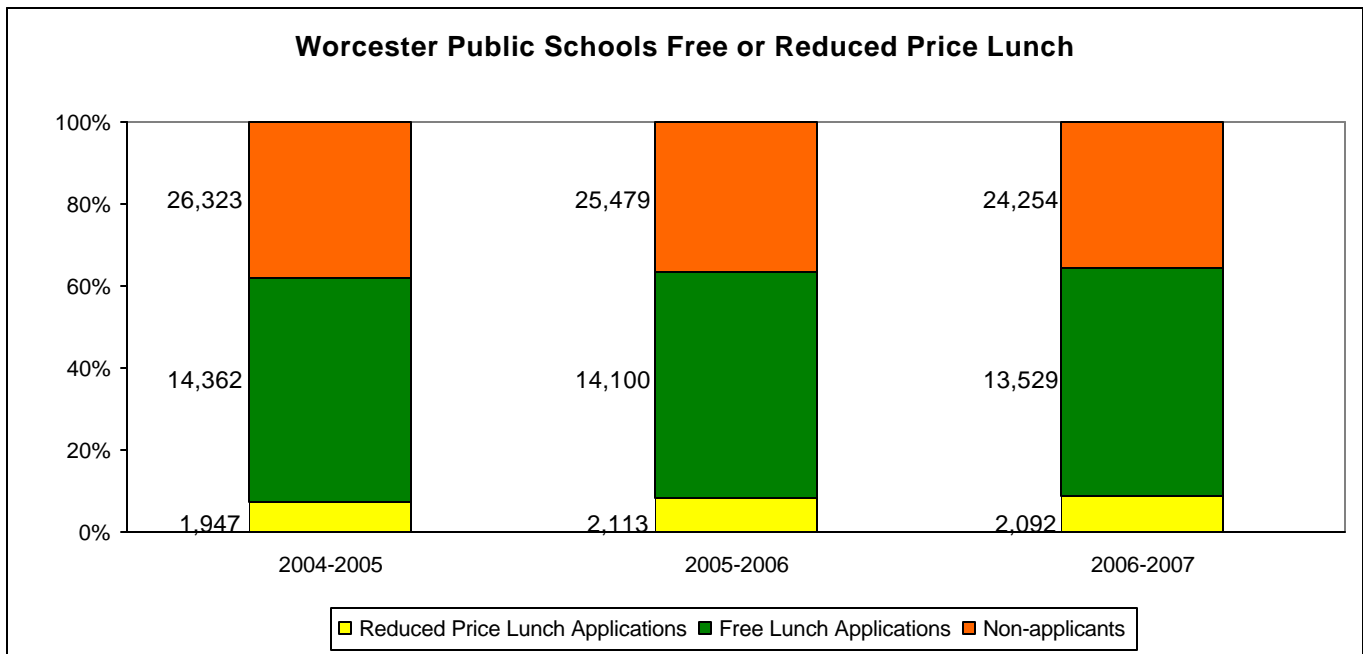
? 62% of pantries and soup kitchens saw an increased demand for emergency food aid from elderly people.

? 31% of surveyed mothers not living in shelters stated there were days last month when family members went without food.

? 66% of people requesting emergency food from pantries are families with children while 8% are elderly.

Source: “Worcester Hunger Facts – January 2007 Survey”, Rachel’s Table

7. Indicator: Worcester Public Schools Free and Reduced Lunch

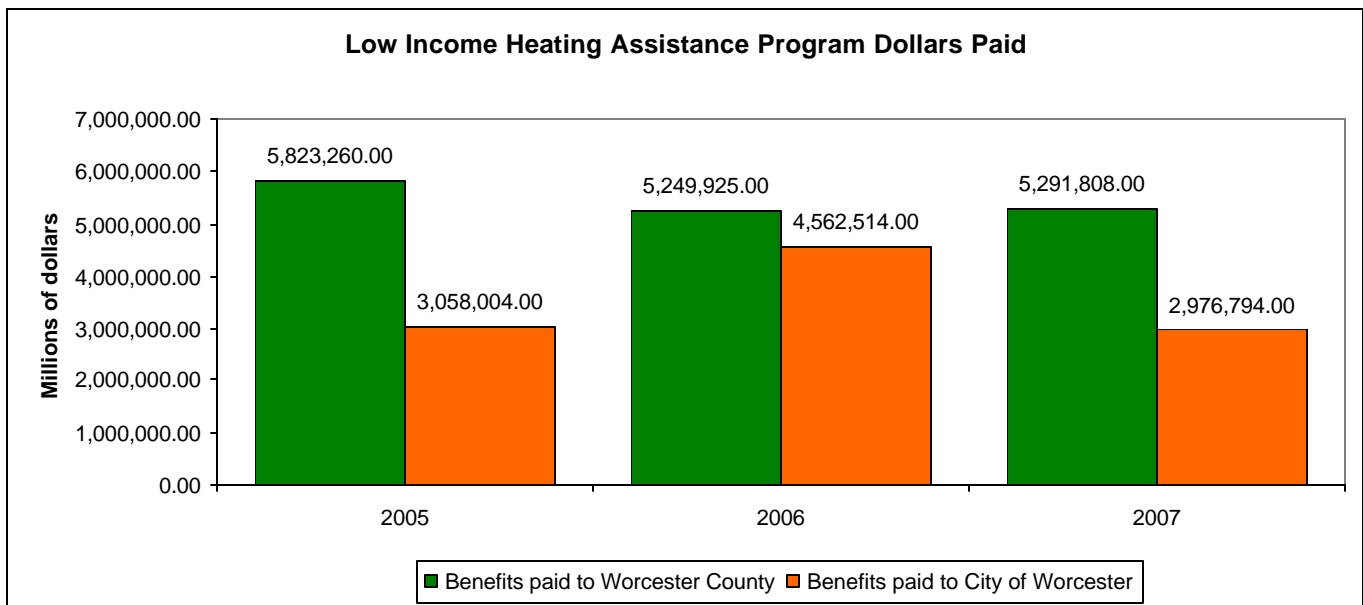
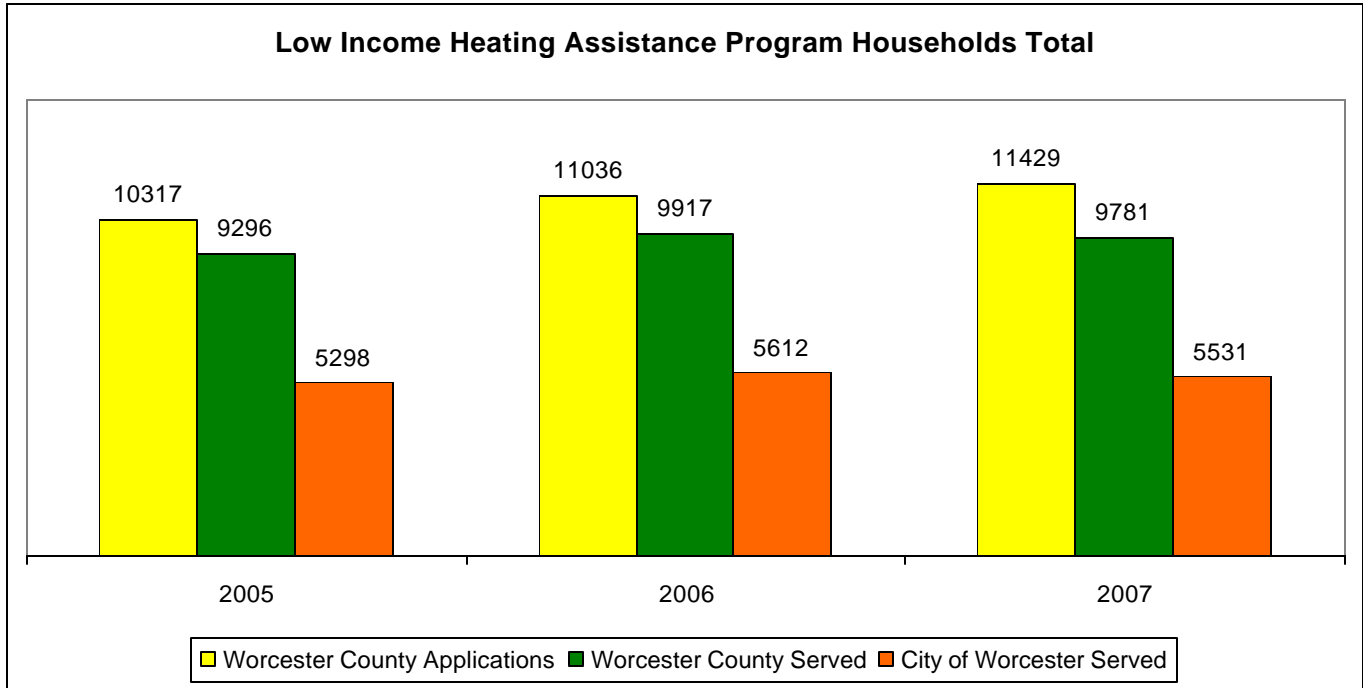


Source: Department of Education. Total enrollment equals the number of students enrolled in the Worcester Public Schools.

? In recent years, between 62% and 64% of students in the Worcester Public Schools have applied for free or reduced price lunches. Students qualify for the program based on their household income.

Social and Mental Health Services Indicators

8. Indicator: Low Income Heating Assistance Program household total



Source: Worcester Community Action Council 2005-2007

? When an individual or family is financially unable to pay for their home heat during the winter, the quality of life is severely damaged. From 2005 to 2007 Worcester’s applications for fuel assistance increased. Unfortunately the dollars available to respond to this basic need decreased. Worcester’s applications and fuel assistance services represent more than 50% of the total for Worcester County.

Transportation Indicators

VI. Transportation

The area of transportation includes access to and effectiveness of public and private transportation (air, bus, car, commuter rail) and the impact transportation options have on employment opportunities, economic development, and access to health care.

The indicators selected for this area are:

1. Number of rides provided by Worcester Regional Transit Authority buses
2. Number of bus routes serving Worcester
3. Commuter train ridership from Worcester to Boston
4. Number of bus trips provided by private service (Peter Pan Bus Lines) to Boston
5. Means of transportation to work
6. Total commuting time rate among regional competitive cities
7. Commercial aviation service
8. Number of taxi medallions

Why this matters:

Communities that have a safe, affordable, flexible transportation system enhance the quality of life for all residents by ensuring convenient access to jobs, school and recreation. Efficient, reliable public transportation reduces traffic congestion and harmful pollution. Communities that incorporate alternative means for commuting to work such as biking or walking can also improve and enhance the health of residents.

Communities without a seamless public transportation system disproportionately impact people who need public transportation the most. Elders, youth, the disabled and those living in poverty depend on public transportation to access jobs, education, groceries, and essential services such as doctors, dentists, and childcare. On-road vehicle travel, traffic congestion, and commute times are also increased, causing stress and reducing the amount of time one can spend in leisure as well as work-related activities.

1. Indicator: Number of rides provided by the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) buses

The WRTA has been struggling financially with an expected 6% budget reduction to take place in 2008. This budget reduction is likely to reduce the number of bus routes and services currently supporting residents in 14 towns (including Worcester).

According to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority's (WRTA) July 2005 – June 2006 Summary Analysis, total number of rides for FY06 was 2,625,092. The WRTA operates 29 fixed bus routes. Most WRTA routes originate at Worcester City Hall downtown on Main Street.

? WRTA bus ridership was approximately 220,000 rides per month between July 2005 and July 2006.
Source: Worcester Regional Transit Authority

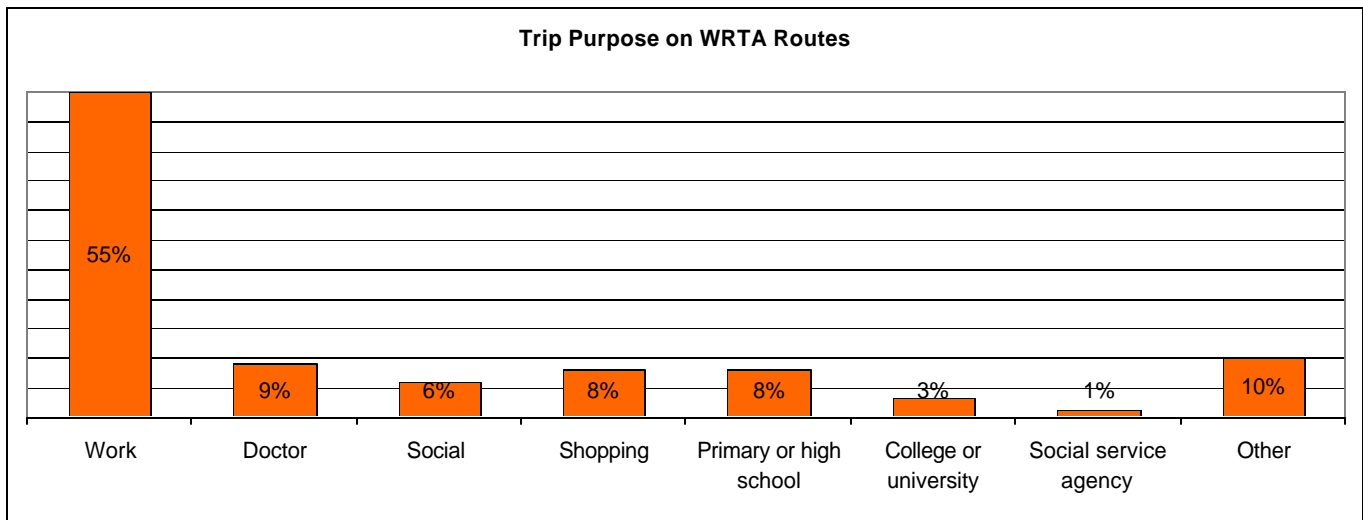
Transportation Indicators

2. Indicator: Number of bus routes serving Worcester

There are 29 WRTA bus routes serving Worcester.

Source: Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

Residents of the towns served by the WRTA rely primarily on the bus for the purpose of getting to work as can be seen in the graph below. A reduction in the number of bus routes or services provided by the WRTA by budget reductions that may occur in 2008 could negatively impact economic growth and access to work for the residents of the towns served currently by the WRTA. Commuters will move less efficiently and affordably in the region.



Source: Telegram & Gazette, Wednesday, November 14, 2007 "2004 WRTA rider survey", T&G Staff/DON LANDGREN JR.

3. Indicator: Commuter train ridership on the Worcester/Boston line.

? According to the December 2006 annual train audit, ridership on the Worcester/ Boston commuter train was 9,252 compared to 5,085 in the February 1995 annual train audit, indicating that ridership has nearly doubled over the 10 year period.

There were 10 commuter trips as of November 30, 2007. Expansion of the Worcester-Boston Commuter Rail is a priority for local legislators. Problems currently exist with the inconvenient and restricted schedule. Discussions are underway with CSX , the track owners, to negotiate an increase in the number of daily trips.

Source: MBTA Data

4. Indicator: Number of bus trips provided by private service (Peter Pan Bus Lines) to Boston

Peter Pan Bus Lines provides 20 round trips daily from downtown Worcester to Boston.

Source: Peter Pan Bus Lines Schedules January 11, 2008

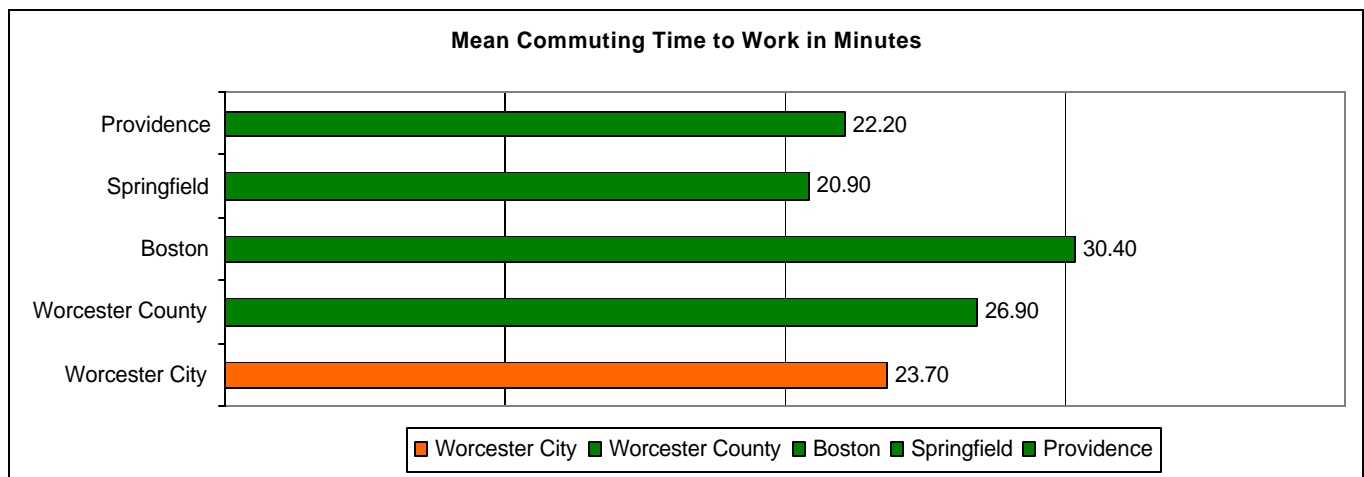
Transportation Indicators

5. Indicator: Modes of transportation used by Worcester residents to go to work

	Car, Truck, or Van (alone)	Car, Truck, or Van (carpooled)	Public Transportation (excluding Taxi Cab)	Walked	Bicycle	Work at Home
Worcester City	83.4%	8.8%	2.8%	2.9%	0.3%	0.5%
Worcester County	84.4%	7.9%	1.7%	1.8%	0.1%	3.3%
Boston	43.30%	7.30%	31.70%	12.50%	0.90%	2.9%
Springfield	76.50%	12.30%	4.00%	4.30%	0.10%	2.7%
Providence	66.30%	14.30%	7.90%	5.30%	0.50%	3.5%

Source: US Census, Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey, Worcester city, Massachusetts, Selected Economic Characteristics, 2005

? People in the city of Worcester drive to work by themselves at a higher rate (83.4%) than in other similar cities. Only 66.3% of people in Providence drive to work by themselves compared to 83.4% in Worcester. In Providence, 7.9% of residents use public transportation to get to work compared to only 2.8% in Worcester.



6. Indicator: Total commuting time to work among regional cities

Source: US Census, Data Set: 2005 American Community Survey, Survey: 2005 American Community Survey

? Residents of Worcester have a shorter travel time to work – about 23.7 minutes on average -- compared to residents of Boston (30.4 minutes on average). This is also only slightly higher than the average travel time to work of Providence residents (22.2 minutes)

Transportation Indicators

7. Indicator: Commercial aviation service

Airline passenger service was suspended at the Worcester Airport in 2003. According to a report published by the Worcester Regional Research Bureau, there are approximately one million people in Central Massachusetts who could generate close to two million airline trips per year. Improving commercial aviation would positively contribute to the economic revenue of the region. At this time, the possibility of successfully recruiting airlines is considered highly unlikely and dependent upon the airport being easily accessible to a highway system.

8. Indicator: Number of taxi medallions

Anecdotal and newspaper reports suggest that there is uneven access to taxicabs in all neighborhoods of the city, and cottage transport services have emerged to respond to unmet transportation needs.

Common Pathways is made up of a twenty-two member **Leadership Council**, a fifteen-member **Support Team** and the following topic-specific **Work Groups**: Convening, Communications, Community Indicators, Resource and Development, Economic Development, Education, Allocation/ Distribution, Evaluation, Health Disparities and Cancer Disparities/MassCONNECT.

The Leadership Council is comprised of key leaders representing a broad base of community interests and assets. They include:

Jim Cruickshank, Chair
Lois Barry, CEO, LUK, Inc.
John Bassett, President of Clark University
Armand Carriere, Executive Director, UniverCity Partnership
Deb Cary, Director, Mass Audubon Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center and Wildlife Sanctuary
Michael Coonan, Business Manager, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union No. 4
Jill Dagilis, Executive Director, Worcester Community Action Council
Tim Garvin, President and CEO, United Way of Central Massachusetts
Bruce Gaultney, Publisher, Telegram & Gazette
Gary Gemme, Chief, Worcester Police Department
Juan Gomez, Executive Director, Centro Las Americas
Lois Green, Hoche-Schofield Foundation
Paul Hernandez, Co-Chair, HOPE Coalition
Dennis Irish, Vice President, Marketing and Government Relations, Saint Vincent Hospital
Richard Kennedy, President and CEO, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
Ann Lisi, Executive Director, Greater Worcester Community Foundation
John O'Brien, President and CEO of UMASS Memorial Health Care
Michael O'Brien, Worcester City Manager
Sarai Rivera, Pastor, Iglesia Cristiana de la Comunidad
Carlton Watson, Executive Director, Henry Lee Willis Community Center
Janice Yost, President and CEO, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts, Inc.

How you can get involved: Common Pathways looks forward to continuing to provide the Worcester community with a process for deeper and broader community dialogue on issues that affect all of our lives and provide indicators to measure our progress toward a healthier quality of life for all in our city. Everyone is invited to participate. To get involved, contact:

Clara Savage, Coordinator
44 Front Street Suite 280
Worcester MA 01608
Phone: 508-438-0515
Fax: 508-438-0515
Web: www.commonpathways.org

Special thanks to all individuals and organizations who have participated in putting together this report., especially the members of Common Pathways Indicators Work Group.