

**A Select Overview of Poverty in  
Three Boston Neighborhoods:  
Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan**

Report Prepared for  
The Center for Church and Prison, Inc.  
Dorchester, Massachusetts

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## Introduction

This brief overview was prepared for the Center for the Study of Church and Prisons, Inc. to assist this organization's work on behalf of fighting and reducing poverty in Boston, Massachusetts. Its Executive Director, the Rev., Dr. George Walters-Sleyon, asked the author to provide some basic facts about the experience of poverty in the City's predominantly Black neighborhoods: Roxbury, Mattapan and parts of Dorchester, and that may be used for a forthcoming forum on this topic.

It should be noted that this report was composed only as a background piece and not a complete study about potential strategies for future actions to reduce or eliminate poverty in Boston. The study is not exhaustive but only meant to provide a select summary and overview of poverty experiences in three neighborhoods where the Black population is predominantly located in Boston. A comprehensive overview of poverty in Boston would require assessing the intersectional aspects of poverty, including race and space, class, health and the environment, education, housing, occupation, labor force, age and gender, household and family characteristics, and other variables.<sup>1</sup>

The study is based primarily on data reported in the American Community Survey 2013-2017 5 Year Estimates (ACS); ACS 2008 – 2012; the decennial census of 2010; Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) for 2016 and 2013 – 2017. The first part of the report is organized by categories utilized in the American Factfinder's Table, S1701 *Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months 2013 -2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate*: Race and Latino Origin; Age; Educational Attainment; Employment Status; and Work Experience. Several maps were generated by the author with GIS software to show some of the spatial dimensions of the presence of poverty in Boston and its neighborhoods, particularly, Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester.<sup>2</sup>

While this brief study focuses on poverty as one of Boston's wicked issues<sup>3</sup> and how it impacts a part of the city where a majority of Black and Latino residents live, it should not serve to obscure important resources associated with these areas and its residents as is illustrated

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion about how some of these variables are associated with poverty experiences, see, BOSTON CITYWIDE PLAN TRENDS IN POVERTY AND INEQUALITY, BRA Research Division (October 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Poverty thresholds are used to show the number of persons and families in poverty; for 2019, the threshold for a 1 person family size is \$12,490; for a 2 person family, \$16,901; a 3 person family size 21,330; etc. For more detailed explanation pertaining to Massachusetts, see, <https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/federal-poverty-guidelines-2019>

<sup>3</sup> "Wicked issues" refers to challenges, such as continuing poverty, that cross boundaries and could not possibly be resolved with popularly quick or silo-ed responses: "The public policy landscape is characterized by a host of complex and seem increasingly intractable problems and issues – community safety, poverty, social inclusion, health inequalities, teenage pregnancies, urban regeneration, substance misuse, climate change and homelessness – an ever growing and assorted list of community concerns. Such issues have been referred to as 'wicked' because they 'defy efforts to delineate their boundaries and to identify their causes, and thus to expose their problematic nature'" See, The Competent Boundary Spanner by Paul Williams in *Public Administration*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (2002), p.103.

later in this report. Not to be overlooked, also, are the historical and ongoing struggles directed towards fighting or reducing poverty. This is a forewarning raised by historian Robert C. Hayden who wrote about Boston's Black poverty in earlier periods: "An overview of Boston's early black community portrayed with only economic statistics is incomplete, however, because it overlooks the response of poor people to their conditions."<sup>4</sup>

Residents in the very same neighborhoods that have continually faced relatively high levels of poverty have a history of fighting back and in building strategies and actions to improve living conditions many times, and against rising odds.<sup>5</sup> Such resources include the small businesses that have been established; the community-based nonprofits that have played a critical service role; the faith-based organizations; the advocates for the well-being of youth; the advocates for equality *and* equity in public education; and other community activists and representatives seeking to end poverty and its effects.

Given the latter caveat, what does this report suggest about the experiences of poverty in Boston today, and especially in the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester?

- Boston's overall poverty rate remains high, at 20.5% or one fifth of its estimated population of 626,118 persons;
- The overall poverty rate has not changed substantively over the last few years;
- Blacks, Latinos and Asians tend to reflect significantly higher rates of poverty than Whites who are not Latinx; further, only Whites as a group have experienced any decline in their poverty rate over a period of years;
- While higher employment rates and education attainment are associated with lower levels of poverty, the return for such is much lower for Blacks and Latinos;
- In some places, many part-time and full-time workers are still living below the poverty line;
- Higher poverty rates by tracts and neighborhoods tend to be associated (though not exclusively) with predominantly Black (and Latino) areas of Boston;
- Based on "Income to Poverty" ratios, poverty is 'deeper' and more entrenched in Black and Latino communities;

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<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Hayden, "A Historical Overview of Poverty among Blacks in Boston, 1950-1990" *Trotter Review*, vol.17, no.1 (2007), p. 132.

<sup>5</sup> A recent anthology by Melvin B. Miller captures eloquently some of these stories and episodes in Boston: *Boston's Banner Years 1965-2015, A Saga of Black Success* (Archway Publishing: Bloomington, Indiana, 2018); also see, James Jennings, *Black Churches and Neighborhood Empowerment in Boston, Massachusetts, 1960s and 1970s: Lessons for Today* (William Monroe Trotter Institute: University of Massachusetts Boston, 2012).

- Along with greater levels of poverty for Blacks and Latinos and many residents in the three neighborhoods, racialized economic inequality in the form of homeownership rates, median income levels, and unemployment is significant;
- Children and youth in predominantly Black and Latino areas reflect significantly high poverty rates and represent a major component of who is impoverished in these places;
- In the neighborhoods under study, there is a confluence of relatively high poverty with many kinds of economic resources.

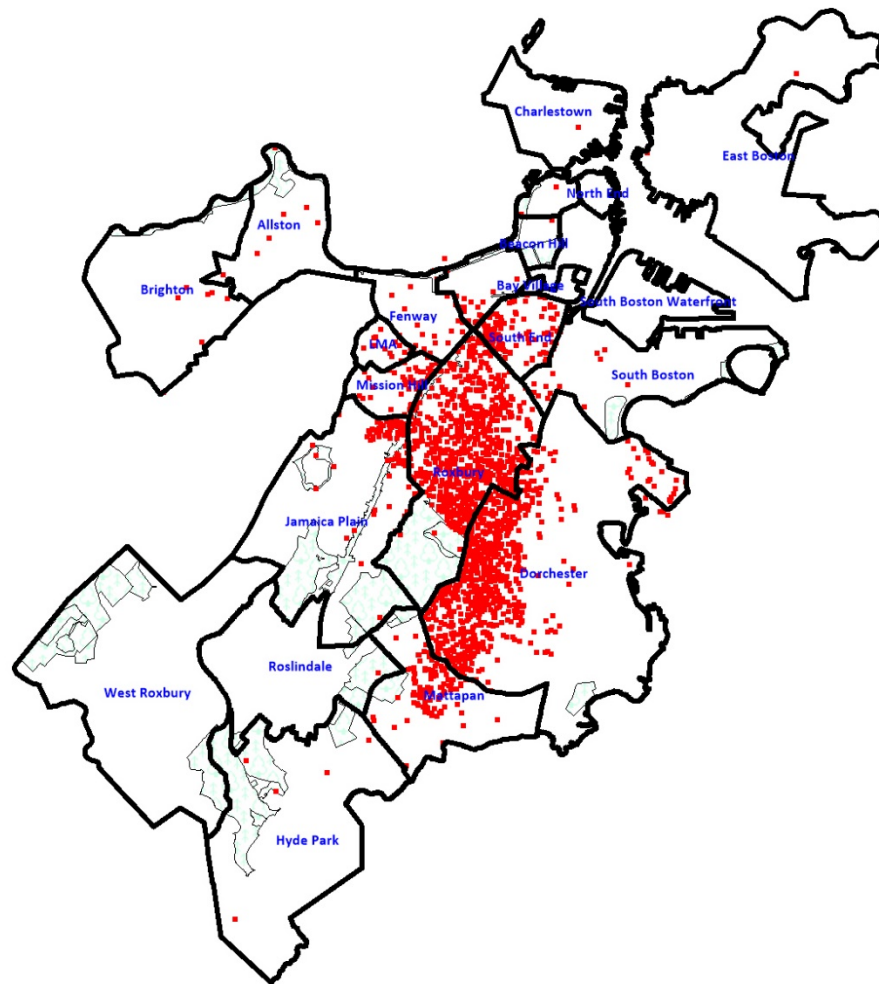
## **A Select Overview of Poverty in Boston**

The 2010 decennial census counted a total Roxbury population of 49,111 persons; Mattapan, 22,500 persons and Dorchester, 114,249 persons. There were 99,138 Black persons living in these three neighborhoods, representing 66% of all Blacks in Boston. There were 41,275 Whites (including Latinos) in these neighborhoods, representing 12.3% of all Whites (including Latinos) in the City. There were 36,304 Latinos (any race) in these neighborhoods, representing approximately a third (33.6%) of all Latinos, and there were 12,103 Asian persons, representing 21.9% of all such persons in Boston.<sup>6</sup>

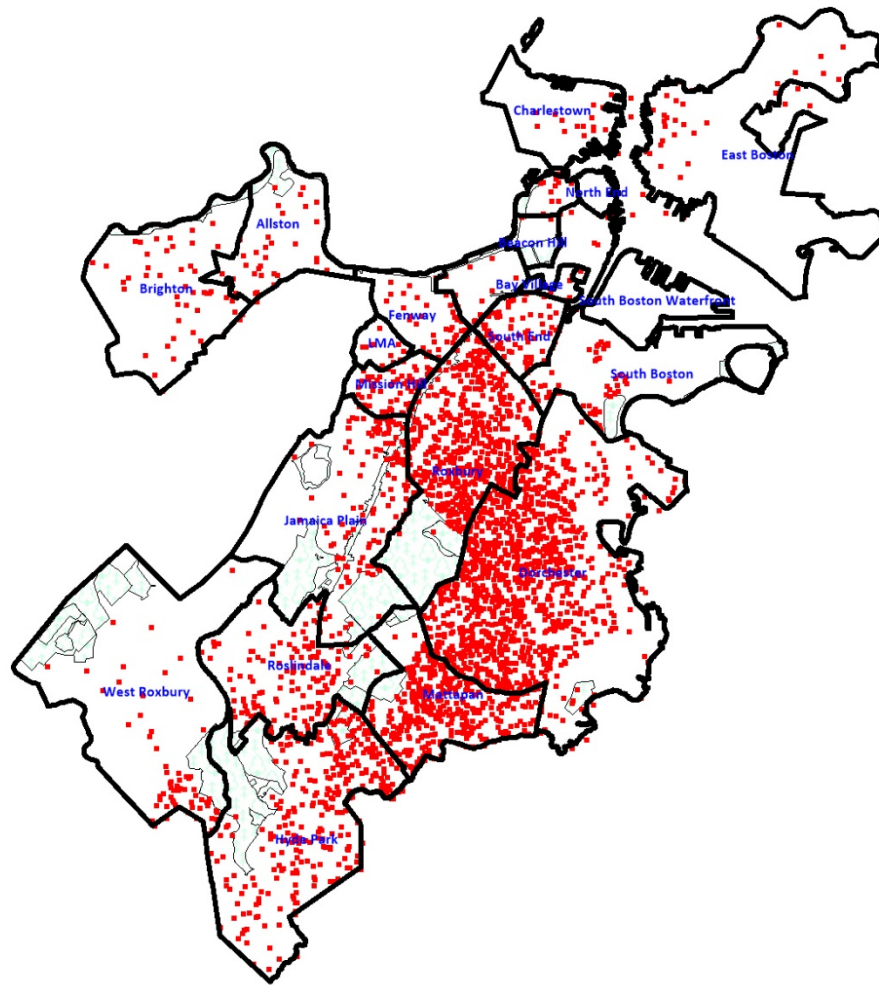
While the Black and Latino communities have grown in population size over the last few decades its residential location patterns have experienced less change. Blacks still tend to be clustered in certain parts of Boston, and Latinos, while more dispersed also are clustered in some parts. The next 3 maps show the clustering or concentration of the Black population in Roxbury, Mattapan and parts of Dorchester beginning with 1970, and followed by similar maps for 2010 and 2013-2017 (ACS). Each dot represents approximately 50 individuals.

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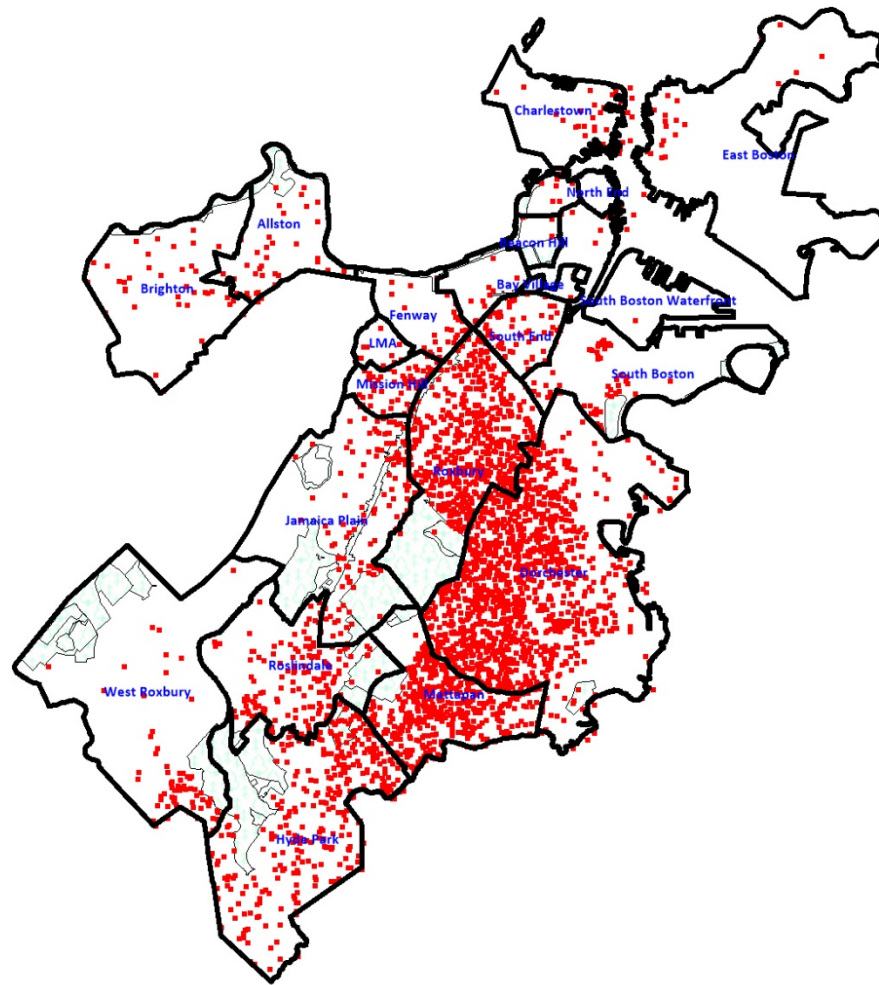
<sup>6</sup> 2010 Decennial Census



Map 1: 1970 Black Residential Patterns



Map 2: 2010 Black Residential Patterns



Map 3: Black Residential Patterns (ACS 2013 – 2017)



Boston's overall poverty rate for all persons is 20.5%, or one fifth of the City's estimated population of 626,118 as reported in the ACS 2013-2017 5 Year Estimates.<sup>7</sup> This means that approximately 128,618 persons were counted as living in poverty status.

Except for an increase in the total population these poverty statistics changed very little since they were reported in the ACS 2008-2012 5 Year Estimates.<sup>8</sup> In this earlier survey the poverty rate was reported at 21.2% and the population counted as impoverished was 123,132 persons. In the earlier survey, the poverty rate for all females was reported at 23% and later in the ACS 2013-2017 it was 22.6%. The figure for males was 19.3% in the earlier survey and 18.3% in the ACS 2013 – 2017 survey.

As might be expected poverty rates are influenced by educational attainment, employment status and work experiences. Generally, for the population that is 25 years or older, the higher the educational attainment the lower the poverty rate. Holding a bachelor's degree or higher is associated with significantly lower poverty rate as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			Poverty Rate
Population 25 years and over	450,376	70,967	15.8%
Less than high school graduate	62,592	20,903	33.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	93,595	19,574	20.9%
Some college, associate degree	80,173	13,761	17.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	214,016	16,729	7.8%

Source: S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

<sup>7</sup> See the following for an explanation of how poverty is measured and how poverty thresholds are determined: "How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty: Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps)." And, "Poverty thresholds are the dollar amounts used to determine poverty status. The Census Bureau assigns each person or family one out of 48 possible poverty thresholds.

- Thresholds vary by the size of the family and age of the members.
- The same thresholds are used throughout the United States (they do not vary geographically).
- Thresholds are updated annually for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).
- Although the thresholds in some sense reflect a family's needs, they are intended for use as a statistical yardstick, not as a complete description of what people and families need to live."

<https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>

<sup>8</sup> The ACS 2013-2017 should only be compared to similar 5 year surveys and that do not overlap in years; the U.S. Census Bureau advises against comparing overlapping datasets: "(example: do not compare 2005-2009 ACS 5-year estimates to 2006-2010 ACS 5-year estimates)" see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html>

Persons who are 16 years and over, and who are unemployed, or only worked part-time also experience significantly higher poverty rates.

Table 2

EMPLOYMENT STATUS			Poverty Rate
Civilian labor force 16 years and over	375,558	40,484	10.8%
Employed	349,911	30,283	8.7%
Male	174,670	11,466	6.6%
Female	175,241	18,817	10.7%
Unemployed	25,647	10,201	39.8%
Male	13,723	5,012	36.5%
Female	11,924	5,189	43.5%
WORK EXPERIENCE			
Population 16 years and over	529,839	100,039	18.9%
Worked full-time, year-round in the past 12 months	246,173	4,851	2.0%
Worked part-time or part-year in the past 12 months	138,206	36,119	26.1%
Did not work	145,460	59,069	40.6%

Source: S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

There are major differences in poverty rates by age, race and ethnicity, and location in Boston. It is perhaps noteworthy to observe that these differences have persisted over both, a period of major economic turmoil during the Great Recession (ACS 2008-2012), and period of prosperity for Boston (ACS 2013 – 2017).

Table 3 shows how poverty is distributed by racial and ethnic groups. Whites who are not Latino have a significantly lower rate of impoverishment (12.2%) than other racial and ethnic groups: the poverty rate for all Blacks is 24.1%; for Asians it is 31.2%; and for the Latinx population it is 31.2%.

Table 3

RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
	626,118	128,618	20.5%
White alone	323,795	47,201	14.6%
Black or African American alone	165,302	39,639	24.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,406	579	24.1%
Asian alone	56,680	17,657	31.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	149	18	12.1%
Some other race alone	46,294	15,673	33.9%
Two or more races	31,492	7,851	24.9%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	124,615	39,035	31.3%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	273,935	33,359	12.2%

Source: S1701: POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

When these rates are compared to the earlier survey (ACS 2008 -2012) it shows that only Whites (who are not Latinx) experienced a decline in the poverty rate, from 14.6% in the earlier ACS 2008-2012 survey, to 12.2% in the last 5-year survey (ACS 2013 -2017).

Racial and ethnic differences in poverty experiences is also reflected in the number and proportion of households in receipt of food stamps, or the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). As illustrated in Table 4 approximately a third of all Black households received food stamps in the last 12 months; the figure for Latinx households is even much higher, at 38.5%. About a fifth (22.4%) of Asian households were in receipt of SNAP. This compares to only 7.3% of White, non Latinx households in receipt of food stamps.

Table 4

	Total Households	Receipt SNAP	
Black	58944	19044	32.3%
Latino	42705	16428	38.5%
Asian	23225	5213	22.4%
White Non Latinx	135746	9901	7.3%

Source: ACS 2013 – 2017

The experience of poverty in Boston has a strong *children and youth* orientation, especially in Black and Latino communities. In this City 29.7% of all impoverished persons are under 18 years (ACS 2013 – 2017). This is an increase from the 27.2% poverty rate reported for persons under 18 years of age in the ACS 2008-2012.

The next Table 5 shows unemployment rates by gender, race and ethnicity for the entire City. In the last 12 months Black males 16 to 64 years who were part of the labor force had the highest unemployment rate at 12.9%; Black females registered an unemployment rate of 9.9%.

The male unemployment rate for Latinos in the labor force and the same age category was 9.5%, and for Latina women, 10.2%. Asian males and females had a relatively low unemployment rate at 7.5% and 7.3% respectively. The lowest unemployment rate in Boston was held by White males who are not Latino at 5.8%, and even lower for White women, not Latina, at 3.8%.

Table 5

Labor Force Characteristics	Black		Asian		White NonLatino		Latinx	
Total:	134157		56577		276049		99063	
Male:	60507		25996		135200		48047	
<b>16 to 64 years:</b>	<b>52784</b>		<b>22770</b>		<b>118886</b>		<b>44459</b>	
<b>In labor force:</b>	<b>39641</b>		<b>15463</b>		<b>97370</b>		<b>33949</b>	
In Armed Forces	110		14		494		16	
Civilian:	39531		15449		96876		33933	
Employed	34428		14286		91265		30709	
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>5103</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>1163</b>	<b>7.5%</b>	<b>5611</b>	<b>5.8%</b>	<b>3224</b>	<b>9.5%</b>
<b>Not in labor force</b>	<b>13143</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>7307</b>	<b>32.1%</b>	<b>21516</b>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>10510</b>	<b>23.6%</b>
Female:	73650		30581		140849		51016	
<b>16 to 64 years:</b>	<b>61710</b>		<b>26637</b>		<b>119059</b>		<b>46138</b>	
<b>In labor force:</b>	<b>46338</b>		<b>16457</b>		<b>93854</b>		<b>32303</b>	
In Armed Forces	15		0		39		0	
Civilian:	46323		16457		93815		32303	
Employed	41727		15259		90227		29008	
<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>4596</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>1198</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>3588</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>3295</b>	<b>10.2%</b>
<b>Not in labor force</b>	<b>15372</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>10180</b>	<b>38.2%</b>	<b>25205</b>	<b>21.2%</b>	<b>13835</b>	<b>30.0%</b>

Source: ACS 2013 - 2017

The median household income for Roxbury is \$28,455, compared to Mattapan at \$43,767 and Dorchester at \$49,445. The median household income for Boston was estimated at \$59,293 in the ACS 2013 - 2017.

Further, average wages tend to be lower for Black, Latino and Asian workers compared to White workers, even controlling for certain levels of educational attainment. For example, Black workers with only a Grade 9 schooling level earned much lower than Whites with the same schooling, as shown in the Table 6. The gap was even larger for Latinx workers compared to White workers. This was also the case with workers who attained an Associate Degree. What makes these racial gaps more glaring is that for Whites in this table, Latinos can be included and thus the average wages for White workers would be even higher if Latinos were not included.

Table 6

Average Wages for Workers by 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Schooling Level and AA Degree	Grade 9	Associate Degree
Black	\$15,114	\$38,312
Latino	\$13,561	\$33,112
Asian	\$14,705	\$27,927
White	\$20,493	\$44,030

Source: Public Use Microdata Sample, 2013 - 2017

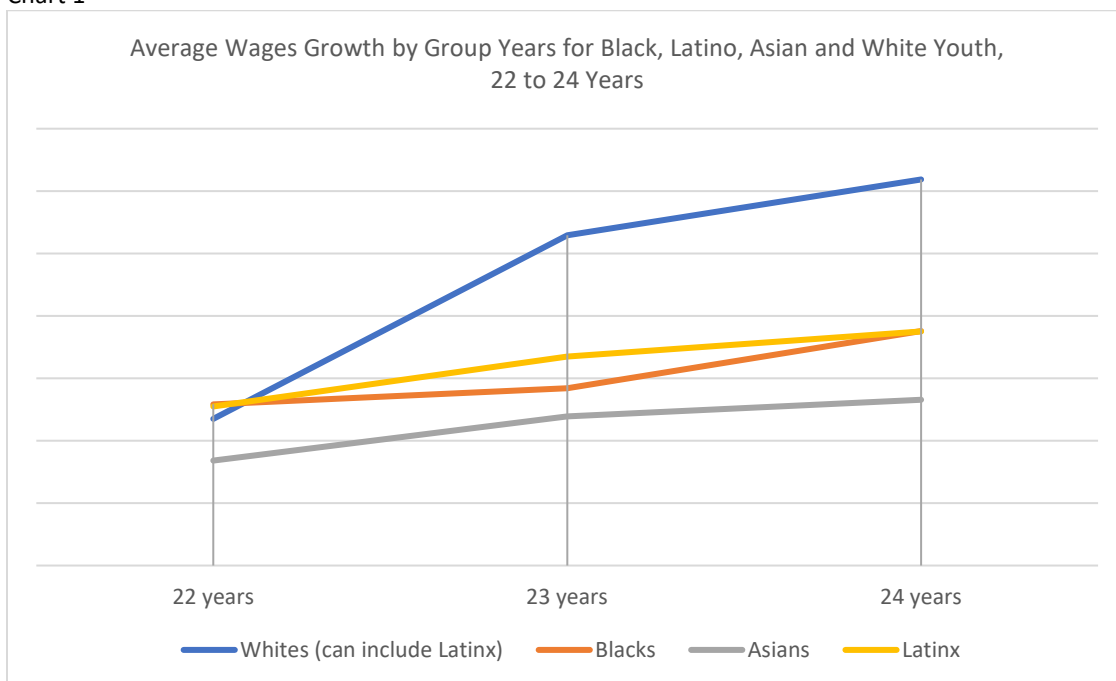
Average wages for even very young workers reflect racial and ethnic disparities. Table shows that at 22 years of age, the average wages of Whites (can include Latinx), Blacks and Latinx are relatively in the same ballpark. (This is not the case for Asian persons 22 years of age whose average wage is significantly lower than the other groups). But these average wages are very different at 23 years of age, and 24 years of age for these groups. In fact, the average wages for White youth (can include Latinx) grow explosively compared to the growth for Blacks, Asians and Latinos. This growing disparity in average wages by race, ethnicity between 22 years and 24 years of age is also shown in the chart following Table 7.

Table 7

Average Wages for Youth	22 years	23 years	24 years
Whites (can include Latinx)	11,752.80	26,453.90	30,932.40
Blacks	12,912.00	14,197.30	18,786.80
Asians	8,409.90	11,960.90	13,282.50
Latinx	12,745.70	16,744.20	18,754.80

Source: PUMS 2013 – 2017

Chart 1



Source: PUMS 2013 – 2017

## Select Overview of Poverty: Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester

While approximately one fifth of Boston's population is impoverished, rates are considerably higher in parts of the city's predominantly Black (and Latino) neighborhoods. About one fifth (20.7%) of all persons in Mattapan, and almost a quarter (23.9%) of all persons in Dorchester were reported as having incomes below the poverty level, a third (33.9%) of all persons in Roxbury were considered officially living in poverty.

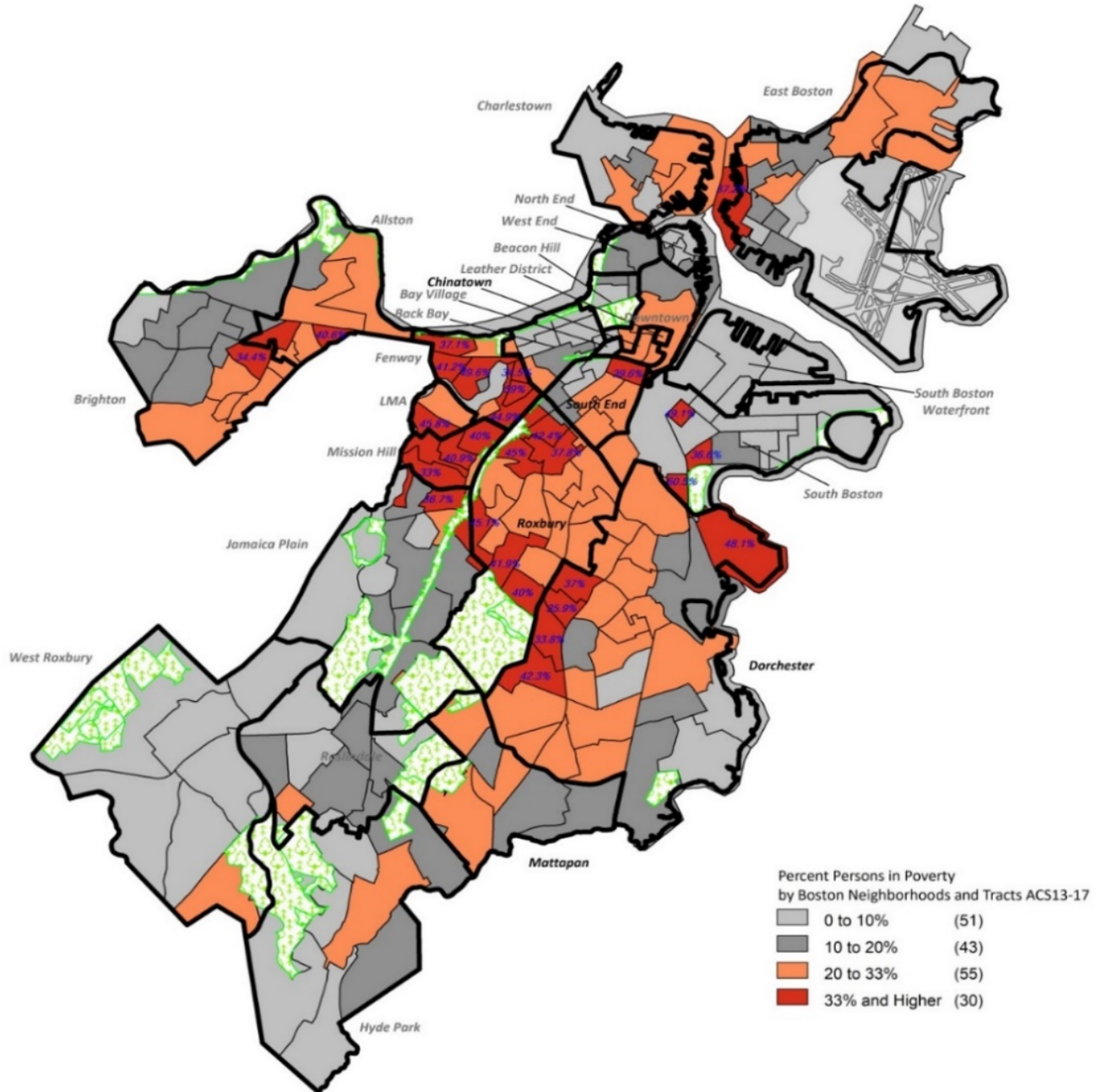
Table 8

	Roxbury		Mattapan		Dorchester		Boston	
Total Persons	49,488		25,148		125,342		625,633	
Inc Below Poverty	16,758	33.9%	5,199	20.7%	29,905	23.9%	128,602	20.6%

Source: ACS 2013 – 2017

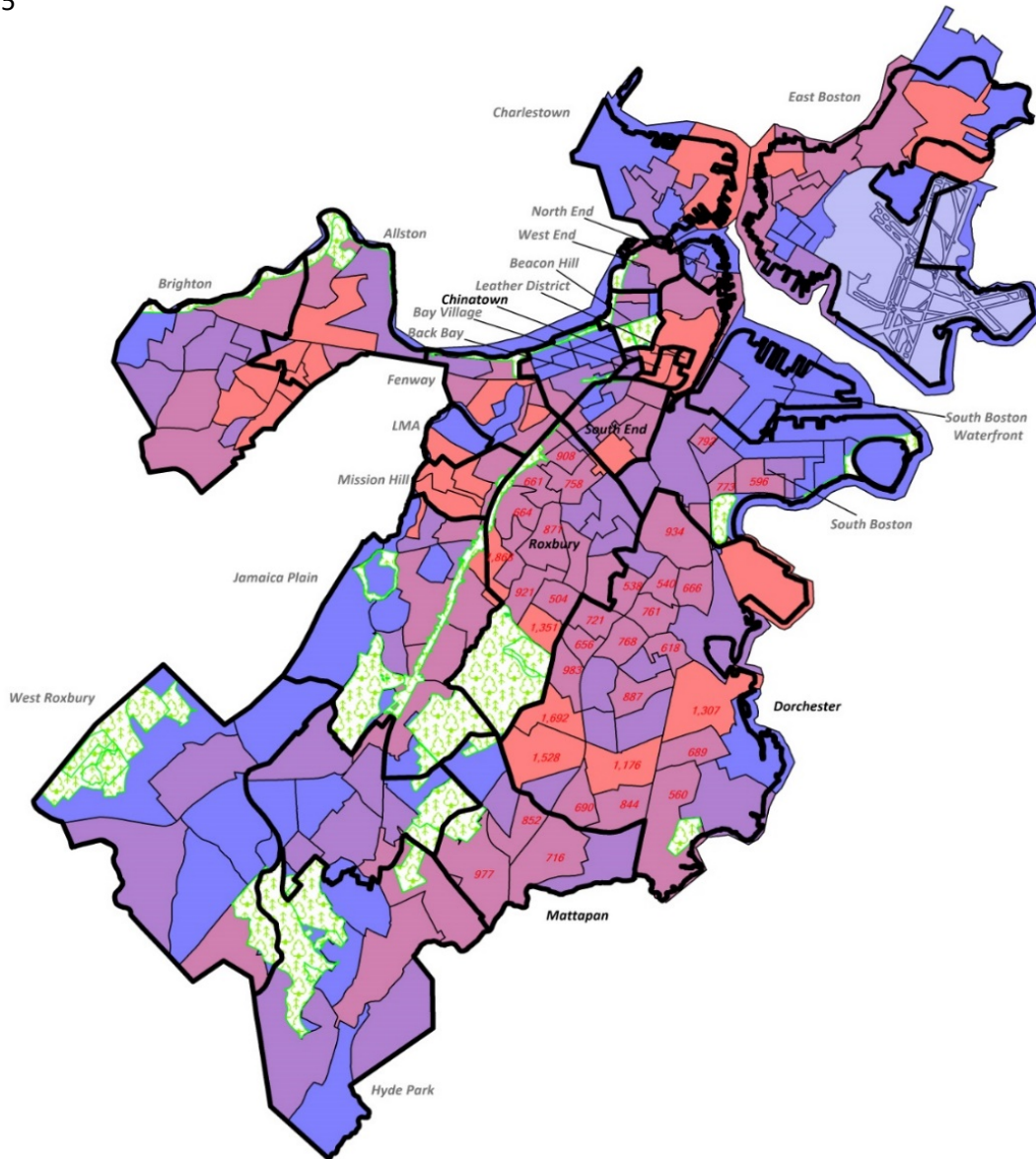
The next map shows the poverty rate by neighborhoods and census tracts. Numerous tracts in the three neighborhoods have official poverty rates that are higher than the city's rate, and some are 33% or higher.

Map 4



Map 5 shows the number of males and females reported as living under the poverty level by tracts and neighborhoods in Boston. The tracts in the three neighborhoods tend to be higher than most other parts of the city.





# of Male and Female Persons Below Poverty Level  
by Tracts and Neighborhoods, ACS 2013 - 2017

- 0 to 250 Persons Living Under the Poverty Level
- 250 to 500 Persons
- 500 to 1,000 Persons
- 1,000 to 2,200 Persons

A review of the “Income to Poverty” Ratio for all census tracts in Boston shows that poverty is ‘deeper’ and more entrenched in many areas of these three neighborhoods (but a few other places, also). The following figures are reported in the ACS 2017 and shows the income to poverty ratios distribution for the entire City of Boston:

- Under .50 of the poverty level = 9.5%
- Between .50 to .99 of the poverty level = 9.2%
- Between the official poverty level, and 24% higher = 3.5%
- Between 1.25 and 1.49 of the poverty level = 3.7%
- Between 1.50 to 1.84 of the poverty level = 6.2%
- Between 1.85 to 1.99 of the poverty level = 2.1%
- And 65.8% of all persons have incomes that is 2.00 times, or twice the poverty level.

In other words, approximately 9.5% of all persons have incomes that are under half the official poverty rate; another 9.2% have incomes that are at least half, or equal to the official poverty level. Another 3.5% have incomes that are slightly higher than the official poverty level. Close to two thirds (65.8%) of all persons have incomes that is at least twice (2.00 times) the poverty level.

How does this distribution look like across the city? The next Map 6 shows that the three neighborhoods where a majority of Blacks reside have numerous and a clustering of tracts where the proportion of persons with incomes at less than half of the poverty rate are much higher than the city-wide rate of 9.5%.

Map 6

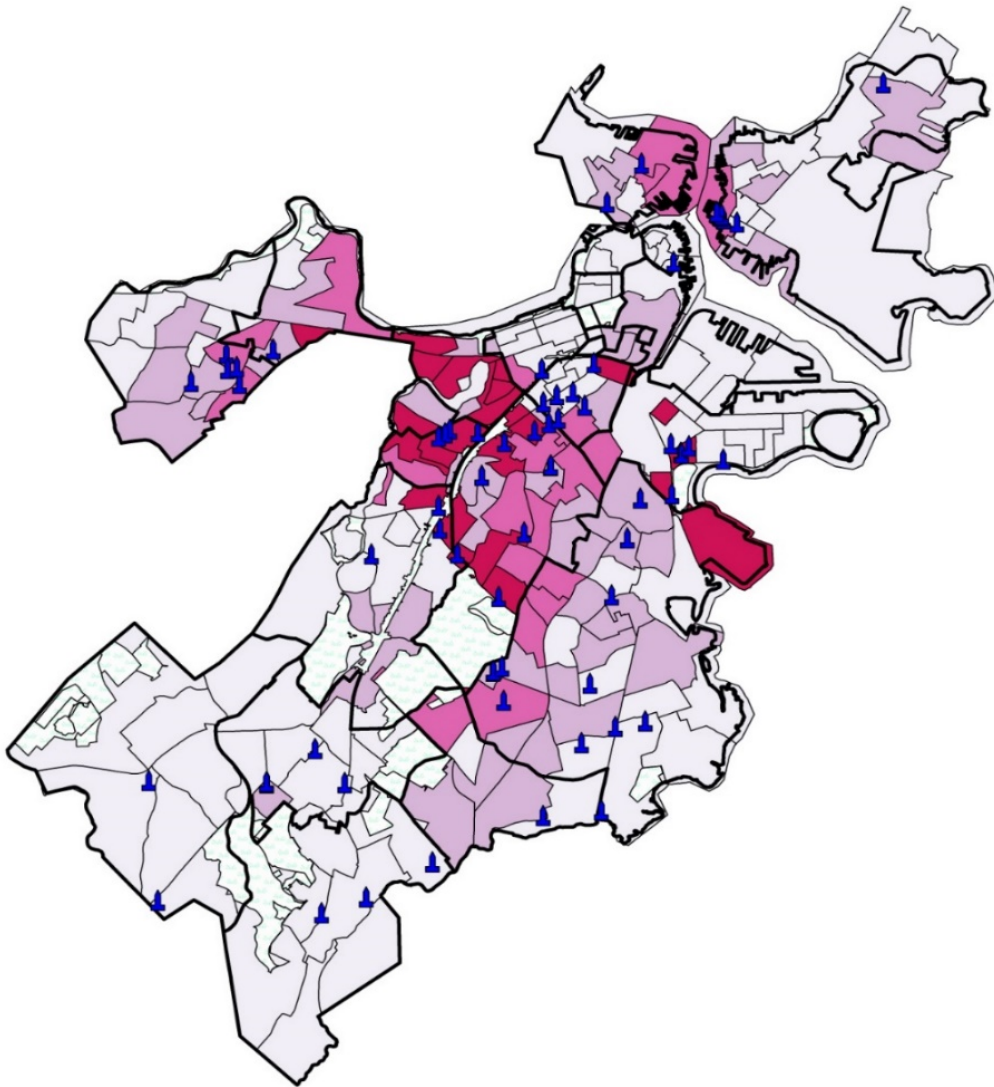
0 to 9.5% of Persons Impoverished Have Inc Less than Half of Official Pov Level  
9.5 to 19%  
19 to 42%

It is important to point out that the geography of poverty is not determined by the location of public housing as some may believe. Based on another study, the next Map 7 shows that public housing communities are dispersed throughout Boston in areas that range in the level of poverty based on the ACS 2011 – 2015 survey.<sup>9</sup> In many tracts with high poverty levels the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) population is smaller than the total number of persons counted as living in poverty.

#### Map 7

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<sup>9</sup> See J. Jennings correspondence with Office of General Counsel, BHA “Poverty and Boston Tracts Containing Public Housing” (November 20, 2017).



% Persons in Poverty and Public Housing Communities  
Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2011 - 2015

0 to 20%
20 to 30%
30 to 40%
40%+

The composition of the overall poverty population by age shows that persons who are living in poverty tend to be much younger in the three neighborhoods. While 8.7% of all persons reported in poverty are under 6 years of age in Boston, in Roxbury it is significantly higher at 13.6%, and Mattapan 15.4% and Dorchester 10.7%. Table 9 shows that this is also the case for youth in the age range between 6 and 17 years of age. In Boston, approximately 16.2% of all persons in poverty are in the latter age category. Almost one fifth (19.5%) of all persons in poverty in Roxbury and Dorchester (21.9%) are between the ages of 6 and 17; for Mattapan it is significantly higher at 25.4%.

Table 9

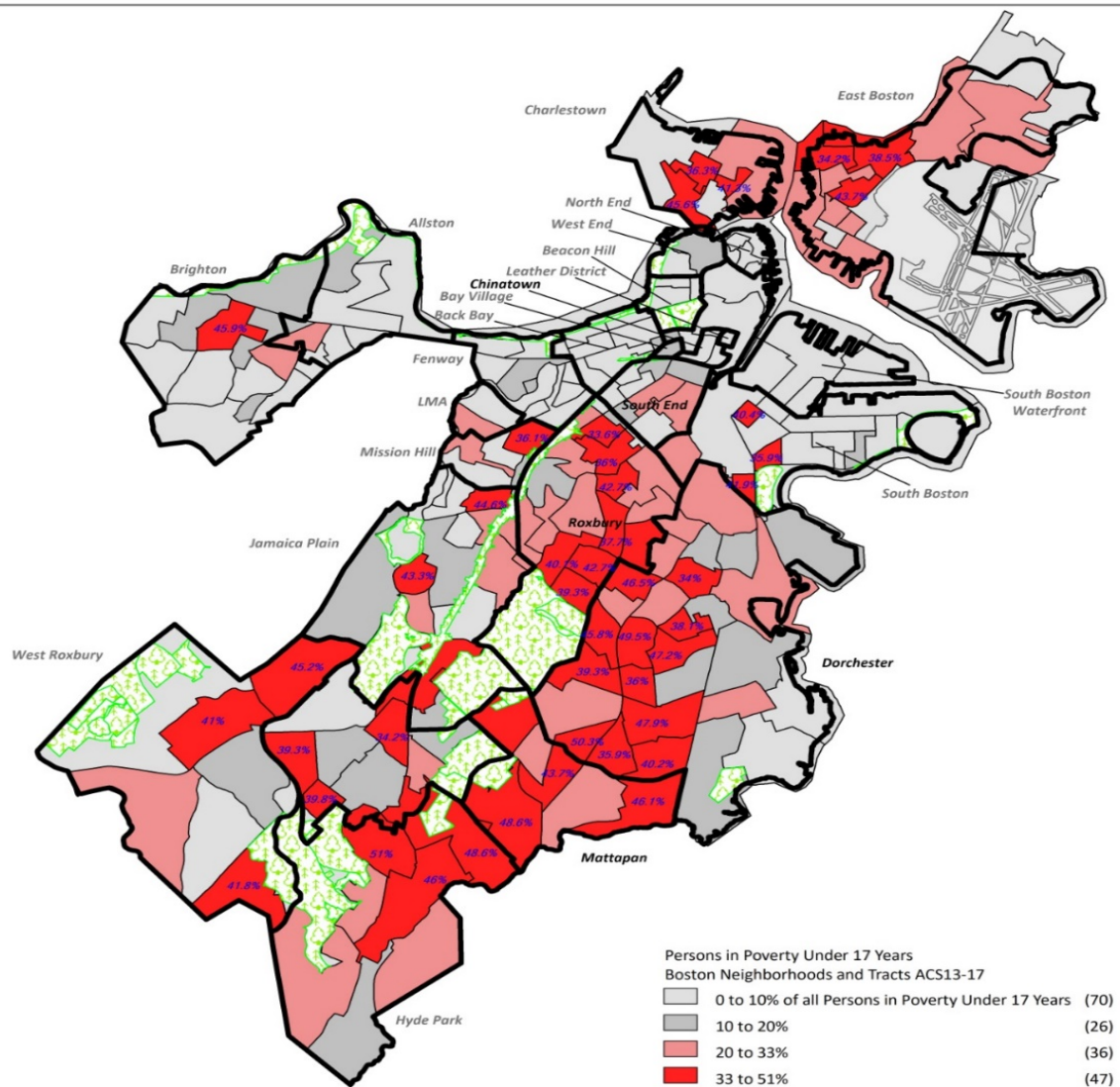
Composition of Poverty Persons by Age	Roxbury		Mattapan		Dorchester		Boston	
Under 6 Years	2,277	13.6%	803	15.4%	3,185	10.7%	11,167	8.7%
6 to 17 Years	3,267	19.5%	1,319	25.4%	6,544	21.9%	20,794	16.2%
18 to 59 Years	8,477	50.6%	2,531	48.7%	16,305	54.5%	76,902	59.8%
60 to 84 Years	2,602	15.5%	532	10.2%	3,621	12.1%	17,490	13.6%
85 Years and Over	135	0.8%	14	0.3%	250	0.8%	2,249	1.7%

Source: ACS 2013 -2017

In some places within these areas, as well as Boston, the proportion of young people under 17 years of age within the overall population in poverty can even be higher than suggested in the last table. This is illustrated in the Map 8 below; in some parts of Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester (and some other neighborhoods) this proportion can be almost half of all persons reported in poverty. Of the 47 tracts in Boston where the proportion of youth among the total poverty population is between 33% and 51%, 23 of these tracts are in Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester.

Map 8

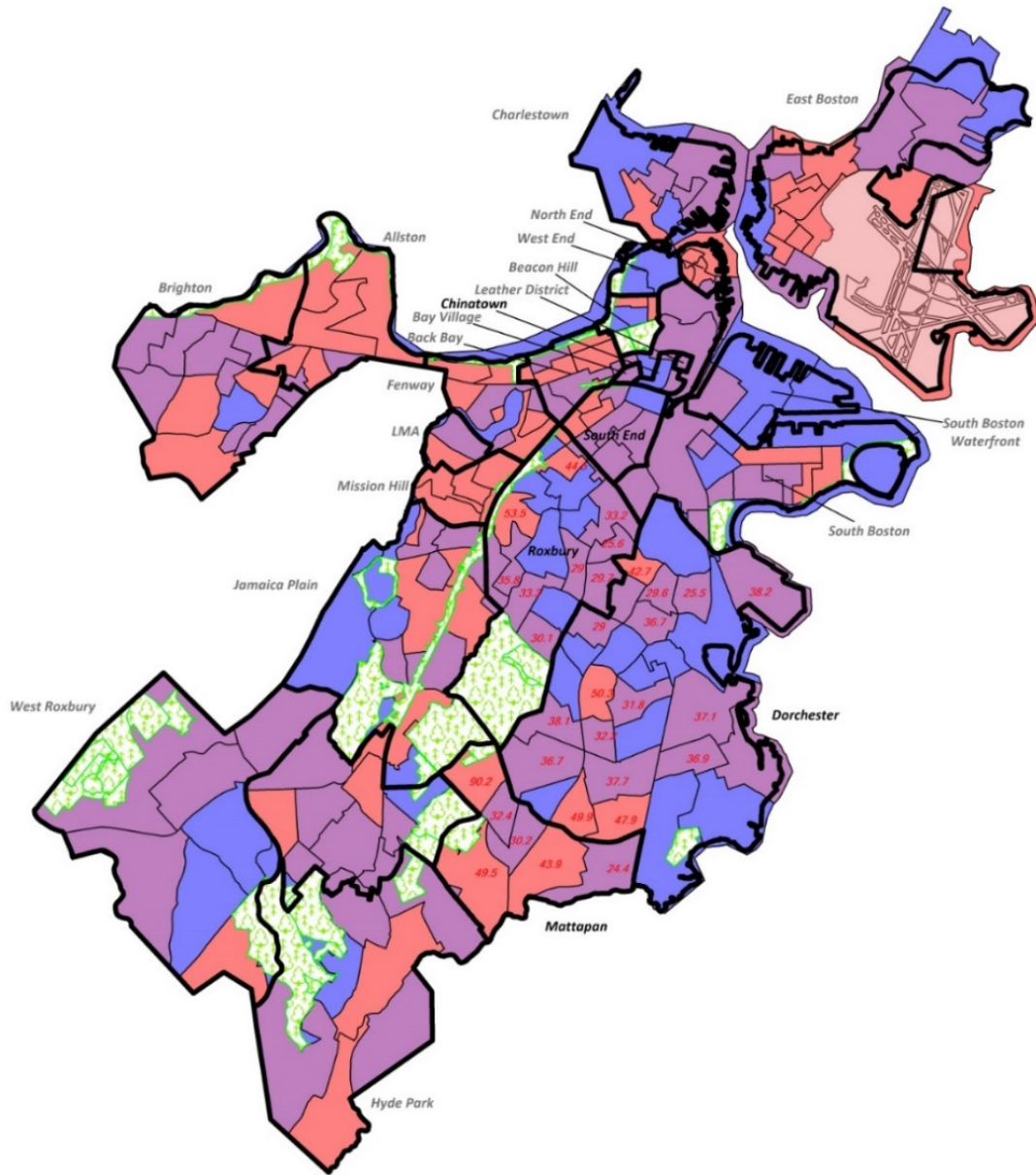




Poverty sometimes occurs even if individuals are working full time or part time or worked during some part of the year. There are many areas in the three neighborhoods where almost a quarter or higher of persons experiencing poverty also worked part-time or at some point during the year. (Map 9) As the following Map 10 shows even working full-time does not prevent every worker from falling into poverty.

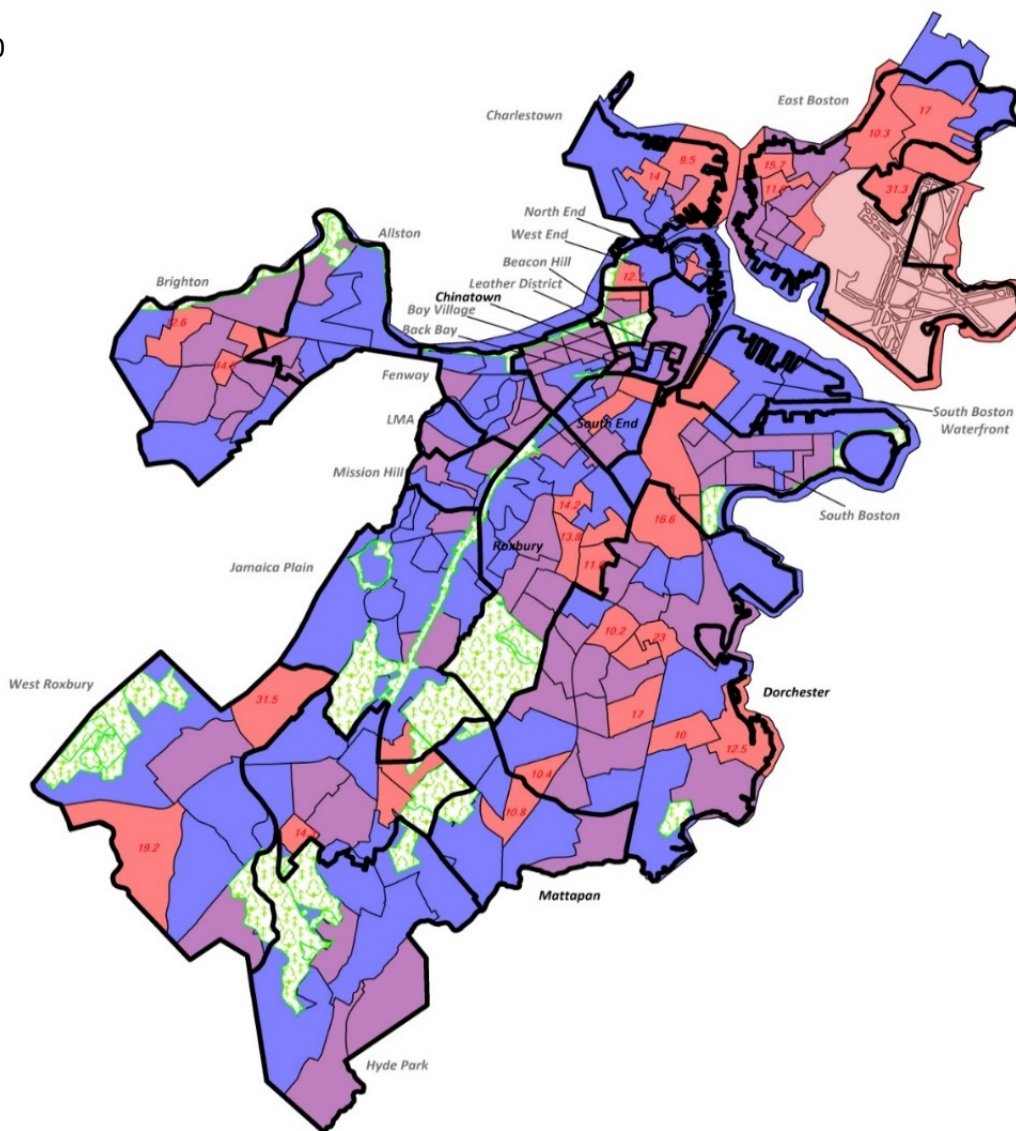
Map 9





%Persons Worked Part Time or Part of Year Under Poverty  
by Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2013 - 2017

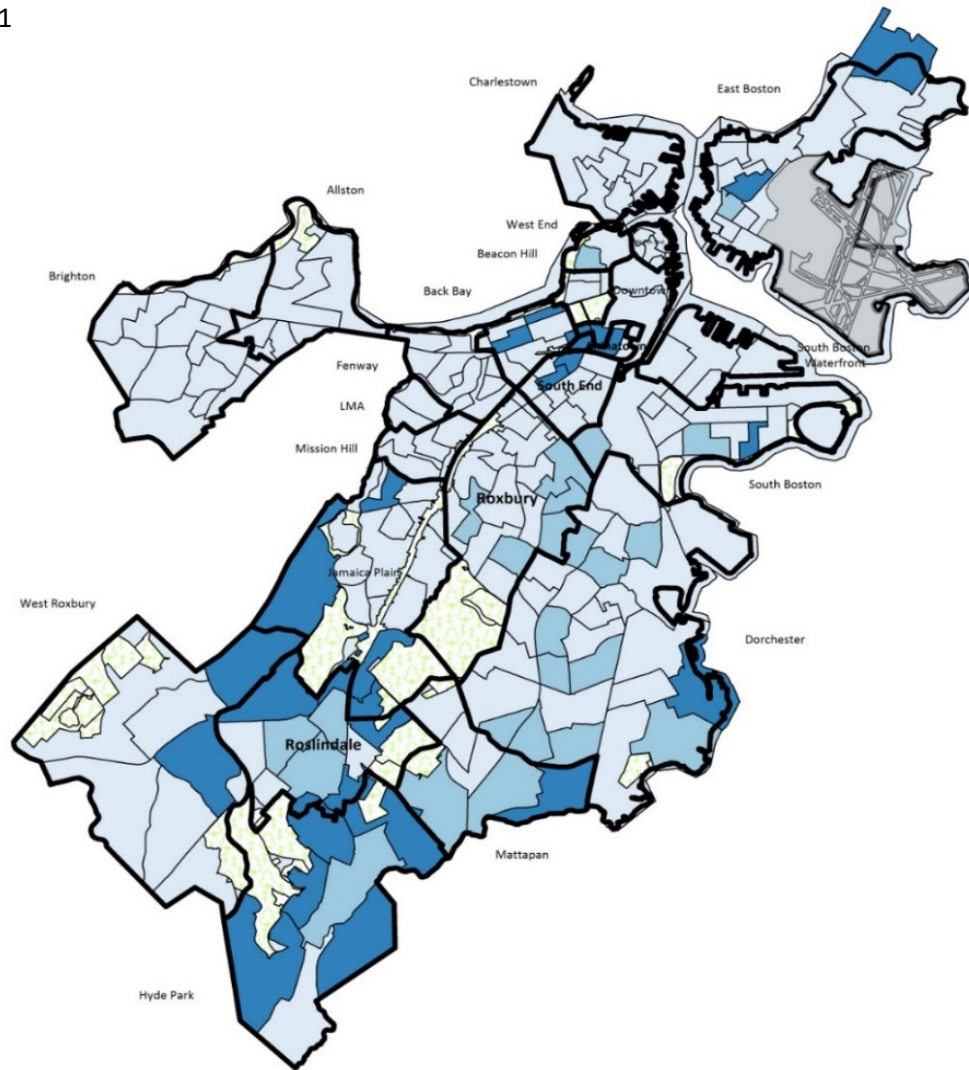
- 0 to 24.4% of Persons in Poverty Worked Part Time or Part of the Year
- 24.4 to 41.4%
- 41.4 to 90.2%



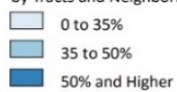
% Persons Worked Full Time, but Experienced Poverty  
by Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2013 - 2017



Homeownership, a key resource for potentially avoiding poverty, tends to be lower in Roxbury and Mattapan than other parts of the City as illustrated in the next Map 11.

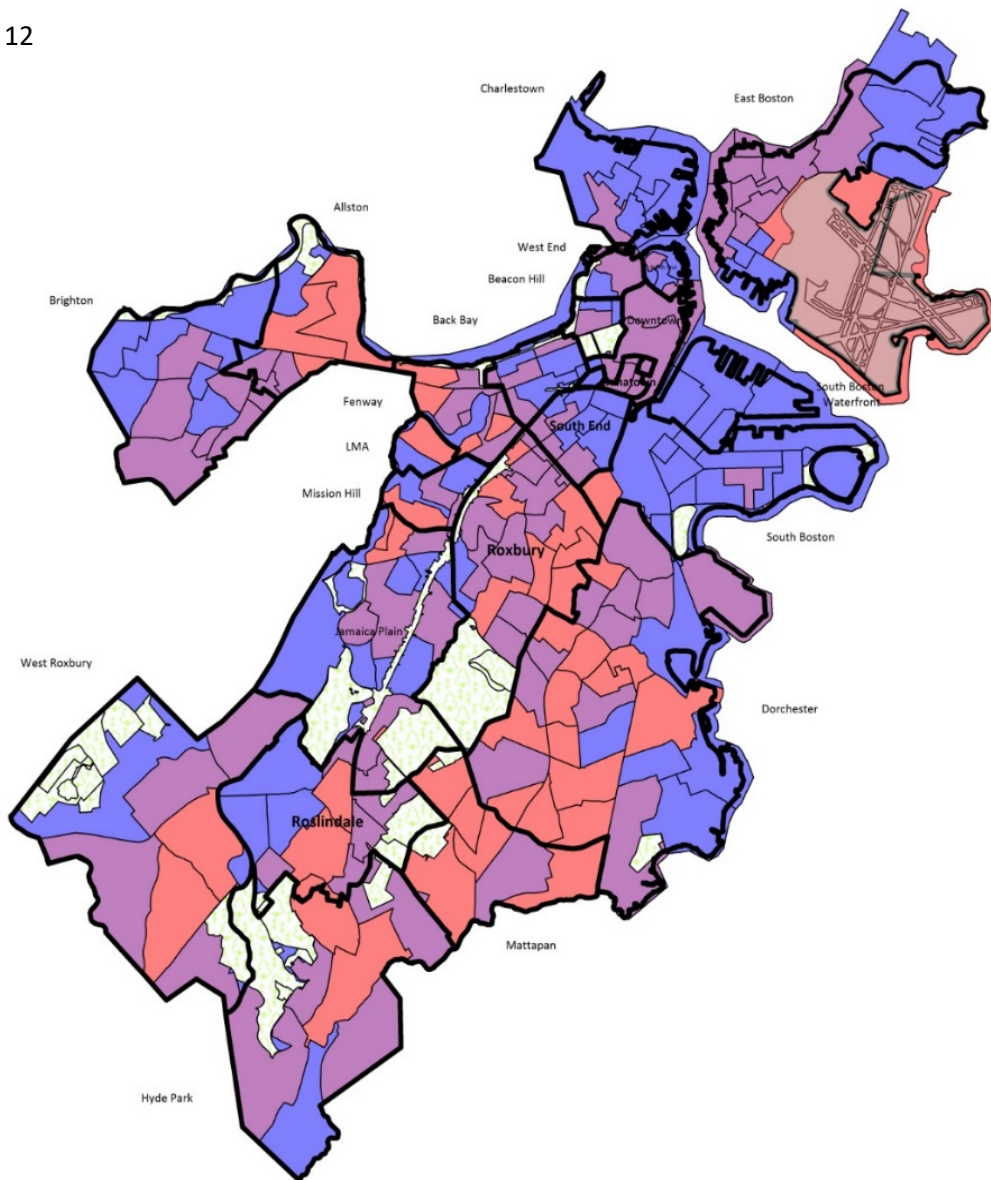


Homeownership Rates Under and Over 35%  
by Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2013 - 2017



As shown in the following Map 12 there are many census tracts in these three neighborhoods showing signs of severe housing cost burden, where between one third or higher of all households pay gross rents that are 50% or more than their household income. The number of households facing severe housing cost burdens is a concern across the City, but especially in places where there are higher levels of poverty and unemployment. Added to lower homeownership rates in predominantly Black areas of Boston, are housing cost burdens which tend to have greater economic vulnerability in these places due to lower incomes.





Proportion of Households Whose Gross Rent is 50% or More of Their HH Inc  
by Tracts and Neighborhoods ACS 2013 -2017

- Up to a Fifth of All HH in the Tract
- Between a Fifth and a Third of all HH
- One Third or More of all HH

## Conclusion and An Important Reminder...

To remind the reader: significantly higher rates of poverty in the three neighborhoods does not suggest the absence of resources or potential economic power. For example, Nielson/Claritas, a national survey organization that works closely with the U.S. Census Bureau, generated effective buying income estimates for the year 2017. GIS software was utilized by the author to show the estimates by the three neighborhoods and Boston. For 2017 the average effective buying power was considerably less for Roxbury (\$39,670) than for Mattapan (\$46,730) and Dorchester (\$54,069), and much less than for the City of Boston (\$72,523). The median effective buying income, where half of all the households are over a figure, and half below it, was estimated at \$24,876 for Roxbury in 2017, again lower than the other two neighborhoods and the City. Nevertheless, Roxbury was estimated to have an aggregate effective buying income of \$829 million compared to Mattapan (\$430 million) and Dorchester (\$2.4 billion) as show in the following Table.

Table 10

	Median Household Income	Average Effective Buying Income	Median Effective Buying Income	Aggregate Effective Buying Income
Roxbury	\$28,455	\$39,670	\$24,876	\$828,988,527
Mattapan	\$43,757	\$46,730	\$37,685	\$429,966,049
Dorchester	\$49,445	\$54,069	\$41,434	\$2,437,601,221
Boston	\$59,293	\$72,523	\$47,722	\$20,357,627,500

Source: Nielson Claritas Population Estimates, 2017

Interestingly, the buying power of female-headed households in some parts of these neighborhoods is considerably higher than that of married-couple householders. This could be due to the larger proportion of female-headed households out of all households, but it is noteworthy to note that in the Roxbury zip code of 02119 female-only householders were associated with a buying power of \$121.9 million compared to married-couple householders at \$80.2 million; the gap is more stark in zip code 02121 where it was \$139.8 million compared to \$54.6 million for married-couple householders. This gap is also reflected in zip code 02126 which covers most of Mattapan.

Table 11

Zip Codes	Married-couple Householder Buying Power	Male Only Householder Buying Power	Female Only Householder Buying Power	Nonfamily Householder Buying Power
02119 Roxbury	80,228,427	27,557,242	121,964,832	200,230,607
02121 Roxbury	54,547,452	29,055,767	139,813,911	129,834,477
02122 Dorchester	147,561,949	35,676,888	117,967,677	189,262,967
02124 Dorchester	255,477,558	66,775,990	294,299,632	344,899,758
02125 Dorchester	183,754,995	26,792,044	153,173,638	313,178,714
02126 Mattapan	105,771,846	33,975,494	137,410,916	129,038,732

Source: ACS 2013 – 2017; accessed with Maptitude 2019 Software

This buying power supports and is linked to many businesses in these three neighborhoods. Approximately 1,715 establishments were reported for Roxbury in 2014, 506 in Mattapan, and 3,164 in Dorchester. These businesses are small, primarily employing between 1 – 4 employees but collectively representing a large workforce and employment base.

Table 12

	Roxbury		Mattapan		Dorchester	
Establishments by number of employees	1,715		506		3,164	
1 to 4 Employees	1,095	64%	359	71%	2,120	67%
5 to 9 Employees	299	17%	79	16%	529	17%
10 to 19 Employees	147	9%	36	7%	241	8%
20 to 49 Employees	106	6%	18	4%	152	5%
50 to 99 Employees	38	2%	9	2%	74	2%
100 to 249 Employees	16	1%	3	1%	39	1%
250 to 499 Employees	8	0%	1	0%	7	0%
500 to 999 Employees	2	0%	0	0%	1	0%
1000 or more Employees	3	0%	0	0%	2	0%

Source: Applied Geographic Solutions (2014); InfoUSA

The latter information leads to a few concluding questions: What kinds of anti-poverty strategies are most effective in a context of major economic growth and incredible concentration of wealth in Boston? What are the policy, programmatic and political facets of such strategies? How can potential local resources be expanded and actualized and directly utilized to reduce poverty? Given a long history of community activism on behalf of improving the quality of life in these communities, what are some lessons for today? And how can all residents, but especially those in communities where the challenge of poverty is much higher than other places, become better organized to change this continuing situation?