

# **Boston's Elderly**

Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Research Division  
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# Elderly (Age 65 and over)

## Summary of Findings

- 10.1% of Boston's population is age 65 and over.
- Since 2000, Boston's elderly population has remained a fairly constant size, only growing 1.5% to reach 62,237 individuals in 2010.
- In 2010, Bay Village had the highest percentage of elderly residents with 21.3%.
- Dorchester had the largest number of elderly residents, with close to 11,000.
- Just over half of the elderly population is between the ages of 65 and 75.
- Boston's elderly population is predominantly white, at 56.5%. This differs from Boston's total population, in which white individuals only make up 47% of the population.
- Approximately 42.4% of Boston's elderly live with some type of disability, compared to 11.3% of Boston's population overall.
- Today, approximately 16.3% of the elderly population is in the labor force. This is up from 10.9% in 2000.
- 21% of Boston's elderly population lives below the poverty line, which is similar to the percent of the city's population below the poverty line (21.4%).
- 22.8% of Boston's elderly receive food stamps.
- The majority (71.2%) of Boston's elderly have a household income that is less than \$50,000. 50.4% of Boston's elderly have a household income that is less than \$25,000.
- There appears to be a high concentration of low-income elderly individuals in Fenway, Brighton and Allston as evidenced by the high concentration of low-income elderly households and the high percentage of elderly who receive food stamps:
  - Fenway: 77.7% of elderly households have a household income less than \$25,000
  - Brighton: 61.6% of elderly households have a household income less than \$25,000
  - Allston: 58.2% of elderly households have a household income less than \$25,000
  - 34.7% of elderly households in Allston, Brighton, Fenway and Kenmore receive food stamps

*This report uses a variety of data sources from the U.S. Census Bureau, including the Decennial Census, the 2007-2011 and 2009-2012 American Community Survey, and the 2007-2011 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS).*

# Boston's Elderly Population

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Overall Population

- Since 2000, the elderly population has remained at a fairly constant size, only growing 1.5% to reach 62,237 individuals in 2010.
- The elderly population as a percent of the total population of Boston shrunk slightly over the last decade from 10.4% to 10.1%.

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

### Population by Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>

- In 2010, Bay Village has the highest percentage of elderly residents with 21.3%.
- Longwood Medical Area had the lowest percentage of elderly residents, with .5%.
- In 2010, Dorchester had the largest number of elderly residents, with close to 11,000.
- Among the more populated neighborhoods<sup>2</sup>, Beacon Hill and Mattapan experienced the most significant increases in the elderly population over the last decade, with 34.3% and 34.2%, respectively.
  - East Boston experienced the largest decline in its elderly population, with a change of -24.8%.

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

### Age

- Just over half of the elderly population is between the ages of 65 and 75.
- There was very little change in the age distribution within the last decade.

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

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<sup>1</sup> See chart at the end of this report for a detailed breakdown of the elderly population by neighborhood.

<sup>2</sup> Excluding the Harbor Islands, Leather District, Longwood Medical Area, and South Boston Waterfront.

## Race & Ethnicity

- While Boston's elderly population has become increasingly diverse in the last decade, they still remain predominantly white. This differs from Boston's total population, in which white individuals only make up 47% of the population.
- The elderly white population decreased by 15.6% since 2000, while the elderly Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino populations all increased.

<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity (2010)</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>% of Elderly Population</b>	<b>% Change Since 2000</b>
White (Not Hispanic or Latino)	35,255	56.6%	-15.6%
Black or African American	14,400	23.1%	29.9%
Asian	5,549	8.9%	49.5%
Hispanic or Latino	5,395	8.7%	82.9%

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

## Disabilities

- Approximately 42.4% of Boston's elderly live with some type of disability, compared to 11.3% of Boston's population overall.<sup>3</sup>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2012 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

## **ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS**

### Labor Force Participation

- Today, approximately 16.3% of the elderly population is in the labor force. This is up from 10.9% in 2000.
- The number of employed elderly increased almost 50% since 2000.
- The number of unemployed elderly also increased since 2000, by 65.9%.
- The most recent recession could be influencing these trends. The recent economic downturn adversely impacted the retirement savings of many Americans. This led to many workers choosing to postpone retirement.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, BRA Research Division Analysis

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<sup>3</sup> Disability data are not available for the 2007-2011 ACS. Therefore, we used the 2009-2012 ACS, the most recent data available over the longest period of time.

## Poverty Status

- Overall, 21% of Boston's elderly population lives below the poverty line, which is similar to the percent of the city's population below the poverty line (21.4%).
- However, there was an 18.6% increase in the number of elderly living below the poverty line since 2000.
- The neighborhoods where the percent of elderly households living below the poverty line is higher than the city's percentage are:
  - Mission Hill (42.2%)
  - Downtown (40.6%)
  - Fenway (36.8%)
  - South End (32.6%)
  - Roxbury (30.1%)
  - Brighton (25.1%)
  - Roslindale (23.3%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

## Household Income

- The majority (71.2%) of Boston's elderly have a household income that is less than \$50,000.
  - 50.4% of Boston's elderly have a household income that is less than \$25,000.
  - 20.8% have a household income between \$25,000 and \$49,999.
  - The remainder (28.8%) has a household income that is more than \$50,000 per year.
- 40.3% of elderly households in Back Bay have a household income over of \$100,000 – by far the highest of all neighborhoods.
- Within the following neighborhoods, the majority of elderly households have an income of less than \$25,000:
  - South Boston Waterfront (89.2%)
  - Mission Hill (78.6%)
  - Fenway (77.7%)
  - Roxbury (62%)
  - South End (62%)
  - Brighton (61.6%)
  - Downtown (60.4%)
  - Allston (58.2%)
  - East Boston (56%)
  - Roslindale (50.9%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

## Food Stamps

- 22.8% of Boston’s elderly receive food stamps. However, this percentage is higher in the following neighborhoods:
  - Allston, Brighton, Fenway and Kenmore, where 34.7% of the elderly rely on food stamps.
  - Parts of Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and Mattapan, where 29.2% of the elderly receive food stamps.<sup>4</sup>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BRA Research Division Analysis

## Social Security Income

- Like many individuals who are 65 and over in the U.S., 75.7% of Boston’s elderly population receives Social Security income.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BRA Research Division Analysis

## **HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS**

### Household Type

- Just over half of Boston’s elderly live alone (51.4%).
- 48.6% of Boston’s elderly live in households with 2 or more people.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

### Housing Tenure

- Just over half of Boston’s elderly households rent their homes<sup>5</sup> (52.8%).
  - This percentage is highest in Allston, Brighton, Fenway and Kenmore, where the percentage is 67.1%.<sup>6</sup>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007-2011 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), BRA Research Division Analysis

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<sup>4</sup> Due to data limitations, we are not able to get these data at the neighborhood level. The smallest geographies available are PUMAs, which group neighborhoods together.

<sup>5</sup> “Elderly household” is defined as one in which at least one person living there is 65 or over.

<sup>6</sup> Due to data limitations, we are not able to get these data at the neighborhood level. The smallest geographies available are PUMAs, which group neighborhoods together.

Elderly Population by Neighborhood							
Neighborhood	2000			2010			% Change of Pop
	#	% of Elderly	% of Neighborhood	#	% of Elderly	% of Neighborhood	
Allston	1,065	1.7%	4.2%	1,095	1.8%	3.8%	2.8%
Back Bay	1,555	2.5%	8.7%	2,056	3.3%	11.4%	32.2%
Bay Village	264	0.4%	22.1%	279	0.4%	21.3%	5.7%
Beacon Hill	696	1.1%	7.7%	935	1.5%	10.4%	34.3%
Brighton	5,484	8.9%	12.5%	4,904	7.9%	10.7%	-10.6%
Charlestown	1,643	2.7%	10.8%	1,684	2.7%	10.2%	2.5%
Chinatown	677	1.1%	19.0%	681	1.1%	15.3%	0.6%
Dorchester	9,933	16.2%	8.4%	10,742	17.3%	9.4%	8.1%
Downtown	1,209	2.0%	16.4%	1,332	2.1%	11.9%	10.2%
East Boston	4,696	7.7%	12.2%	3,532	5.7%	8.7%	-24.8%
Fenway	1,479	2.4%	5.0%	1,525	2.5%	4.5%	3.1%
Harbor Islands	22	0.0%	3.4%	15	0.0%	2.8%	-31.8%
Hyde Park	3,974	6.5%	13.2%	3,944	6.3%	12.9%	-0.8%
Jamaica Plain	3,738	6.1%	9.8%	4,007	6.4%	10.7%	7.2%
Leather District	4	0.0%	1.8%	25	0.0%	3.9%	525.0%
Longwood Medical Area	21	0.0%	0.5%	18	0.0%	0.5%	-14.3%
Mattapan	2,000	3.3%	8.2%	2,684	4.3%	11.9%	34.2%
Mission Hill	1,262	2.1%	9.1%	1,477	2.4%	9.1%	17.0%
North End	1,468	2.4%	15.2%	1,308	2.1%	12.9%	-10.9%
Roslindale	3,954	6.4%	13.0%	3,477	5.6%	12.1%	-12.1%
Roxbury	3,781	6.2%	9.1%	4,458	7.2%	9.2%	17.9%
South Boston	3,994	6.5%	12.9%	3,234	5.2%	9.7%	-19.0%
South Boston Waterfront	15	0.0%	2.9%	60	0.1%	3.2%	300.0%
South End	1,998	3.3%	9.1%	2,611	4.2%	10.6%	30.7%
West End	613	1.0%	17.0%	679	1.1%	16.6%	10.8%
West Roxbury	5,791	9.4%	20.1%	5,476	8.8%	18.0%	-5.4%