Geographic Distribution: Residents of Massachusetts, Aged 60 and Over

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Geographic Distribution of Older Adults

Across communities in Massachusetts, both the absolute number and proportions of residents over age 60 are increasing at a remarkable pace. This demographic shift is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, raising many practical concerns and implications for municipalities and businesses that target services and goods to older adults. To plan effectively, stakeholders will need to have adequate knowledge about the geographic distribution of older adults across the Commonwealth.

Overall, slightly more than 19% of Massachusetts residents are aged 60 or older. Relatively high concentrations of older adults live on Cape Cod and in communities in far-western Massachusetts (Figure 1). Towns with the largest percentage of older adults include Orleans (51%), Chatham (48%), Eastham (44%), and Dennis (42%) on the Cape, and Tyringham (42%) and Alford (40%) in the Berkshires. Towns with the smallest proportions of older adults include Amherst (11%) in central Massachusetts, and Chelsea (12%) near Boston.
In Massachusetts, there are approximately 1.3 million adults aged 60 and older. In terms of absolute numbers, it is not surprising that the largest populations of older adults reside in or around the Commonwealth’s largest cities (figure 2). According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census, the city of Boston had roughly 88,000 residents who were aged 60 and older, representing about 14% of the city’s total population.

The next largest concentrations of elders were in Worcester where more than 29,000 older adults (16% of the population) reside, and Springfield, with nearly 24,000 residents aged 60 and over (also 16% of the population). The distribution of older adults across Massachusetts is and will continue to be an important determinant of where services and goods are best positioned to serve the state’s older population. In order to maximize resources and to plan effectively for a future in which it is more common for individuals to live longer with unique needs, decision makers need to be aware of where older people live, and where resources are most needed.


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