17.3% of adults in Massachusetts have low literacy

Massachusetts ranks 21 out of 50 in the U.S.

1 in 7 counties in Massachusetts have populations where 25% or more of the residents have below basic literacy.

How does low literacy affect equity and quality of life?

In counties where at least a quarter of the population have below basic literacy, we see that many health, economic, and educational outcomes fall short.

**Unemployment**
- 7.6% low literacy counties
- 5.9% other counties
- 5.4% state

**Median Income**
- $58,993
- $71,560
- $77,378

**Adults Without a High School Degree**
- 14.2%
- 7.6%
- 9.6%

**No Access to Healthcare**
- 3.7%

**Residents Below the Poverty Line**
- 18.4%
- 10.9%
- 10.0%

**Demographics**

The percent of 4th graders with below basic reading by race

- White: 16%
- Latinx/Hispanic: 42%
- Black/African American: 11%
- Asian: 24%
4th Grade Reading Levels

While literacy can be high or low in a given metro area, when we look at 4th grade testing, we can see that the performance in English/Language Arts is not consistent across race and gender.

Unemployment

5.1%

138,155 adults living in Boston are unemployed.

Residents Below the Poverty Line

9.2%

341,021 residents are living below the poverty line in Boston.

Receives Public Assistance

18.5%

179,254 residents receive public assistance in Boston.

Median Household Income

$85,508

Income by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>$94,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx/Hispanic</td>
<td>$48,282</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>$50,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>$92,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data for the Boston-Cambridge-Newton Metro Area

Single Mother Households

11.4%

207,735 households in Boston are single mother households.

Didn’t Receive a High School Diploma

8.6%

286,780 adults living in Boston did not receive a high school diploma.

Racial Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx/Hispanic</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adults who lack proficiency in literacy are defined as those who score level 2 or below on the PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies). Grade level equivalents are estimated, as the PIAAC proficiency levels do not specifically correspond to K-12 grade levels. For more information, visit https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/litproficiencylevel.asp. Fourth grade reading scores come from the NAEP reading assessment. Fourth grade ELA test performance data comes from edopportunity.org. Self-Reported health comes from the Community Health Status Indicators. All other data comes from the American Community Survey. PIAAC data is not available by city. Visit map.barbarabush.org for county-level PIAAC data.