

Equity Project Summary

This report identifies groups experiencing various functional and access needs who may be at higher risk of threats and hazards, as well as specific circumstances that might impact an individual's ability to respond quickly and appropriately before, during, and after an emergency. The data are not exhaustive, are points in time, fluctuate, and have large margins of error in small towns. [Census Bureau Data](#) The aim of this report is to begin identifying trends, vulnerabilities, and strategies that are likely to increase equity in access and outcomes for emergency response information and resources as well as to provide data that can be used to plan for emergencies. Full reports available at [Equity in Emergency Management | WRHSAC](#)

Franklin County Specific Equity Concerns

Franklin County is the most rural county in Massachusetts and has a Council of Governments. This region is comprised of 26 towns, with populations ranging from the Town of Monroe (118 people) to the City of Greenfield (17,768 people) and is Massachusetts' only entirely rural county. According to the Robert Wood Johnson's County Health Rankings, Franklin residents, as compared to the rest of Massachusetts, are more likely to die prematurely, die from suicide, smoke, drink excessively, be food insecure, have a lower household income, have a teen birth, have children in poverty, have a child die, experience more deaths due to injuries, be a single parent, and have more children living in poverty. Rural Franklin County towns are likely to have fewer resources and a significant number of individuals likely to need additional or different assistance in emergencies. In Franklin County about 6,700 people live in poverty, 990 don't have a vehicle, 4,300 age 65+ live alone, and over 10,000 have one or more disabilities that significantly impact daily living. By 2100, Franklin temperatures are expected to raise 5.6F, the highest increase for a Massachusetts county, raising the number of expected heat emergencies, heart attacks, ER visits, etc. and creating another emergency within every emergency response. (U.S. Census Fact Finder n.d.; Massachusetts Environmental Public Health Tracking.). Note that data from small towns have very large margins of error which the sources provide. [Census Bureau Data](#)

Western Mass Hazard Vulnerability Assessments

In the past, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalitions, and the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition have conducted Hazard Vulnerability and Threat and Hazard Identification Risk Assessments to identify the most likely threats and how likely they are to occur. The State 2013 & 2018 State Hazard Mitigation Plans also list threats and vulnerabilities to consider. [ocn921510011.pdf](#). ([Massachusetts Integrated State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan | Mass.gov](#)).

Franklin County Specific Hazards, Threats, Concerns, and Vulnerabilities

1. **Flooding:** Many towns in Franklin border water and over 3300 homes are subject to frequent, catastrophic flooding, exacerbating food insecurity, transportation, other equity concerns and threatening drinking water supplies for millions in the East.
2. **Population:** 24% of the population is over 65 with a median age of 46.7 years, one of the oldest in Massachusetts. Older adults often live alone, are living with disabilities, have fewer support networks, and need additional assistance in emergencies.
3. **Entirely Rural:** Rural areas have fewer resources, less infrastructure, and higher costs per capita, making emergency response more difficult.
4. **Broadband and Cell Service Gaps:** Many towns are finally getting access to broadband, but affordability as well as digital literacy are significant issues. Cell service remains spotty in the hilly valleys, making communications difficult in emergencies.
5. **Electricity Dependent:** Over 6400 individuals are medically dependent on equipment powered by electricity. The elderly and very young also depend on electricity to maintain a safe temperature range and keep medicines refrigerated, making power outages a real concern.

Town of Orange: Selected Population Characteristics Contributing to Inequities in Emergencies

Summary: The population of Orange is not as old or rural as most of Franklin County and has a much lower Medium Household Income. About 2200 people are aged 60 and older, 840 children are ages 9 and under, 1500 people are living with one or more disabilities, 40% of children are living in poverty, and about 100 people depend on electricity for medical equipment and might need to be evacuated along with their medical supplies to shelters. Older adults, young children and those living in poverty or with disabilities are at greater risk during emergencies and will likely need additional support. Orange has been designated an Environmental Justice Area based on income disparities.

| | Total Population | | | Land Area | | Children 9 and Under | | People 60 – 69 Years Old | | People 70+ Years Old | | Medicare Electrically Dependent - Orange | |
|---------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| | Number of People | Median Age | Median Household Income | Sq. Miles | People Per Sq. Mile | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People. | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | # of Medicare Beneficiaries | # Electrically Dependent |
| Orange | 7,584 | 42.8 | \$56,000 | 35.1 | 216.3 | 843 | 11.1 | 1,401 | 18.5 | 764 | 10.1 | 2,233 | 101 |
| Franklin Co. | 70,894 | 47.5 | \$70,306 | 699.2 | 101.4 | 5,655 | 8.0 | 11,471 | 16.2 | 12,179 | 17.2 | 20,174 | 674 |
| Massachusetts | 6,981,974 | 40.3 | \$94,488 | 7,800.9 | 895.0 | 702,092 | 10.1 | 885,484 | 12.7 | 853,387 | 12.2 | 1,423,062 | 40,208 |

N/A – Not Available or Unknown

Source: US Census [Franklin County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#), [Orange town, Franklin County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#)

Source: Electrically Dependent [HHS emPOWER Map](#)

Source: WMHMCC 2019/2020, [Western MA HMCC Franklin County Vulnerable Population Data \(region1hmcc.org\)](#) [Emergency Preparedness Planning Tool \(region1hmcc.org\)](#)

| | No Vehicle | | Below Poverty Level | | Less than 9th-Grade Education | | Over 65 who live alone | | No English Spoken | | One Disability | | Two Disabilities | |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population |
| Orange | 86 | 1.1 | 761 | 10.0 | 212 | 2.8 | 428 | 29.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 890 | 11.7 | 672 | 8.9 |
| Franklin Co. | 990 | 1.4 | 6,730 | 9.5 | 1,012 | 1.4 | 4,358 | 24.5 | 150 | 0.2 | 6,435 | 9.1 | 4,457 | 6.3 |

| | Vision Difficulty | | Self-Care Difficulty | | Independent Living Difficulty | | Cognitive Difficulty | | Hearing Difficulty | | Ambulatory Difficulty | |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population | Number of People | % of Population |
| Orange | 146 | 1.9 | 322 | 4.2 | 513 | 6.8 | 776 | 10.2 | 372 | 4.9 | 751 | 9.9 |
| Franklin Co. | 1,241 | 1.8 | 1,975 | 2.8 | 3,488 | 4.9 | 4,490 | 6.3 | 3,176 | 4.5 | 4,807 | 6.8 |

Environmental Justice Areas Source 2020: [Environmental Justice Populations in Massachusetts | Mass.gov](#)

Risk Factors [Franklin County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#)

| Geographic Area | Environmental Justice Area | % Minority Population Other than White Alone | Median Household Income as % of MA Inc. | % Children under 18 Living in Poverty | % Seniors 65+ Living in Poverty |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Orange | Yes | 9.3% | 59.3% | 40.7% | 7.8% |
| Franklin Co. | 10/26 Towns | 11.3% | 74.4% | 20.1% | 10.3% |