

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 margins of error. The aim of this report is to begin identifying trends, vulnerabilities, and strategies that are likely to increase equity in access and outcomes among all individuals for emergency response information and resources as well as to provide data that can be used by each Western Mass community to plan for emergencies. Full reports available at [Equity in Emergency Management | WRHSAC](#)

Hampden County Specific Equity Concerns

Hampden County is unique among the four Western MA counties due to its relatively large urban core population in an otherwise mostly rural area, with the potential for the more populated urban areas to strain resources in a significant emergency. Major areas and groups of concern include children in poverty, high injury and premature death rates, violent crime rates, lack of education, language barriers, transportation issues, diverse populations (religious, racial, gender, age), substance use disorder rates, mental health conditions, disabilities, electricity dependent (medical equipment), and chronic diseases especially relating to obesity. Note that very small towns will have much larger margins of error in the data. [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](#)).

Hampden County Specific Hazards, Threats, Concerns, and Vulnerabilities

Hampden County's 23 municipalities are very diverse, ranging in size from less than 500 to over 150,000 residents. Median Household income also ranges from about \$35,000 to over \$100,000. With these disparities in population size and income, it is challenging for Hampden communities to work as a county together on common vulnerabilities and threats. Communities regardless of size are threatened by severe weather, flooding, extreme heat, loss of power, and other severe weather-related events. They are all vulnerable to pandemics and other disease outbreaks and hazardous spills.

Hampden County Specific Hazards, Threats, Concerns, and Vulnerabilities

- **Large population of non-English speaking individuals** with at least 50 different languages spoken within the county.
- **Many living in poverty** or otherwise with limited resources, especially those with medical, health, mobility, or cognitive difficulties.
- **Health status:** Least healthy county in Massachusetts according to the Robert Wood Johnson/University of Wisconsin County Health Rankings with high rates of premature death, HIV prevalence, adult smoking, STI rates, drug overdose deaths, and children living in poverty.
- **Sheer numbers** of individuals who have characteristics that indicate they will likely require additional assistance in emergencies, including lack of private vehicles, dependent of electrical medical devices, single parent households, health and mobility issues, and structural and cultural bias and stigma based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or legal or socioeconomic status.

Palmer: Selected Population Characteristics Contributing to Inequities in Emergencies

Summary: Palmer is a small city in Hampden County with a medium population density. The population is older and has a higher Median Household Income than the rest of the county. Almost 100 Palmer residents depend on electricity for their medical equipment, over 1,700 live with one or more disabilities, 600 older adults aged 65 and over live alone and 9% of them live in poverty. 18% of the population identifies as other than White alone. Palmer is an Environmental Justice Area based on income disparities. The old, the young and those living in poverty, alone or with disabilities are at greater risk in emergencies and will likely need additional assistance.

	Total Population			Land Area		Children 9 and Under		People 60 – 69 Years Old		People 70+ Years Old		Medicare Electrically Dependent	
	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
Palmer	12,442	47.0	\$73,568	31.6	393.4	1,124	9.0	1,998	16.1	1,491	12.0	2,738	97
Hampden Co..	461,041	39.5	\$63,866	617	747.2	48,589	10.5	60,779	13.2	56,685	12.3	105,740	4,381
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 [Hampden County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#) [Palmer Town, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#)

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

Source: WMHMCC 2019/2020, [Western MA HMCC Hampden 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 Senior Population	Number of People	% of Population	Number of People	% of Population	Number of People	% of Population
Palmer	161	1.3	174	1.4	1,379	11.1	636	28.3	11	0.1	1,076	8.7	713	5.7
Hampden Co.	8,287	1.8	17,850	3.9	74,362	16.1	23,572	28.0	7,557	1.6	36,583	7.9	36,478	7.9

	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
Palmer	293	2.4	235	1.9	543	4.4	748	6.0	514	4.1	716	5.8
Hampden Co.	11,973	2.6	17,602	3.8	29,341	6.4	30,982	6.7	16,038	3.5	37,340	8.1

Environmental Justice Areas [Source2020: Environmental Justice Populations in Massachusetts | Mass.gov](#) **Risk Factors** [Hampden 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
Palmer	Yes	17.5%	77.9%	7.5%	9.2%
Hampden Co.	9/23 towns	41.1%	67.6%	23.3%	13.8%