

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 very 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 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](#)

Hampshire County Specific Equity Concerns

Hampshire County has a population of 162,5888 with twenty independent municipalities ranging in size from a few hundred residents to almost 30,000. The county is known for its five prestigious colleges, and is split by a major river, creating what are known locally as rural East Hampshire and the more populated West Hampshire. The Connecticut River is subject to flooding roads and bridges and bisects many communities. Although 81% of residents are non-Hispanic White, there are significant minority populations as well. With its large student population, Hampshire is unique in Western Mass with a median age lower than the State's but with a larger percentage over 60, making it a priority to plan for both demographics.

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 Mass 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](#)).

Hampshire County Specific Hazards, Threats, Concerns, and Vulnerabilities

Hampshire County has a significant number of people living with a disability or who do not speak English as a first language. It also has a large elderly population. These individuals are at higher risk in emergencies as compared to the general population. There are also local concerns about limited cell service and the lack of public transportation options for daily living needs, even though only 2,200 people report not having a vehicle. These risk factors may be compounded by individuals' physical and mental health, access to social support systems and limited financial resources.

Hampshire County Specific Hazards, Threats, Concerns, and Vulnerabilities

- **Disabilities:** At least 15,000 individuals in the county have one or more disabilities, which can impact their physical or mental ability to respond appropriately and quickly to an emergency or evacuation orders. Over 1,000 are medically dependent on electricity.
- **Transportation & Climate:** Individuals with mobility disabilities, the elderly, and those without vehicles are at greater risk during emergency evacuations or when access to vaccinations is needed. Increased flooding, storms, and other climate-related risks compound transport issues.
- **Health:** Hampshire County, particularly Plainfield, experiences high rates of mental health hospitalization, homelessness, and overdoses.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** People who are single parents, living alone, rent overburdened or experiencing food insecurity are a concern. Lack of housing and access to healthy foods were a constant theme throughout the county.

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

Summary: Plainfield is a small town in Hampshire County with a low population density. The population is older and has a substantially lower Median Household Income than the rest of the county. About 10 residents depend on electricity for their medical equipment, 70 live with disabilities, 40 residents and nearly 40% of children live in poverty, 6% of residents have ambulatory difficulty, and 6% have hearing difficulty. The old, the young and those living alone, in poverty, or with disabilities are more likely to need extra help at home and in shelters in emergencies.

| | Total Population | | | Land Area | | Children 9 and Under | | People 60 – 69 Years Old | | People 70+ Years Old | | Medicare Electrically Dependent - Plainfield | |
|---------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| | 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 |
| Plainfield | 618 | 55.5 | \$59,861 | 21.1 | 29.3 | 26 | 4.2 | 138 | 22.3 | 133 | 21.5 | 217 | 11 |
| Hampshire Co. | 162,588 | 37.3 | \$82,078 | 527.2 | 308.4 | 11,943 | 7.3 | 21,138 | 13.0 | 21,266 | 13.1% | 37,803 | 1,046 |
| 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 [Hampshire County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#) [Plainfield Town city, Hampshire County, MA - Profile data - Census Reporter](#)

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

Source: WMHMCC 2019/2020, [Western MA HMCC Hampshire County Vulnerable Population Data \(region1hmcc.org\)](#) 2023 [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 |
| Plainfield | 0 | 0.0 | 44 | 7.1 | 4 | 0.6 | 35 | 16.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 42 | 6.8 | 33 | 5.3 |
| Hampshire Co. | 2,162 | 1.3 | 16,890 | 10.4 | 1,494 | 0.9 | 7,245 | 23.0 | 391 | 0.2 | 9,634 | 5.9 | 7,412 | 4.6 |

| | 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 |
| Plainfield | 12 | 1.9 | 4 | 0.6 | 21 | 3.4 | 26 | 4.2 | 39 | 6.3 | 35 | 5.7 |
| Hampshire Co. | 2,155 | 1.3 | 9,184 | 5.6 | 6,088 | 3.7 | 6,444 | 4.0 | 4,580 | 2.8 | 7,453 | 4.6 |

Environmental Justice Areas [Source 2020: Environmental Justice Populations in Massachusetts | Mass.gov](#) Risk Factors [Hampshire 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 |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Plainfield | N/A | 10.7% | 63.4% | 39.4% | 9.7% |
| Hampshire Co. | 5/20 | 18.8% | 86.9% | 7.4% | 9.2% |