

# Low-income Households

Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging

Gerontology Institute

John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies



Fact Sheet

December, 2019

## Highlights

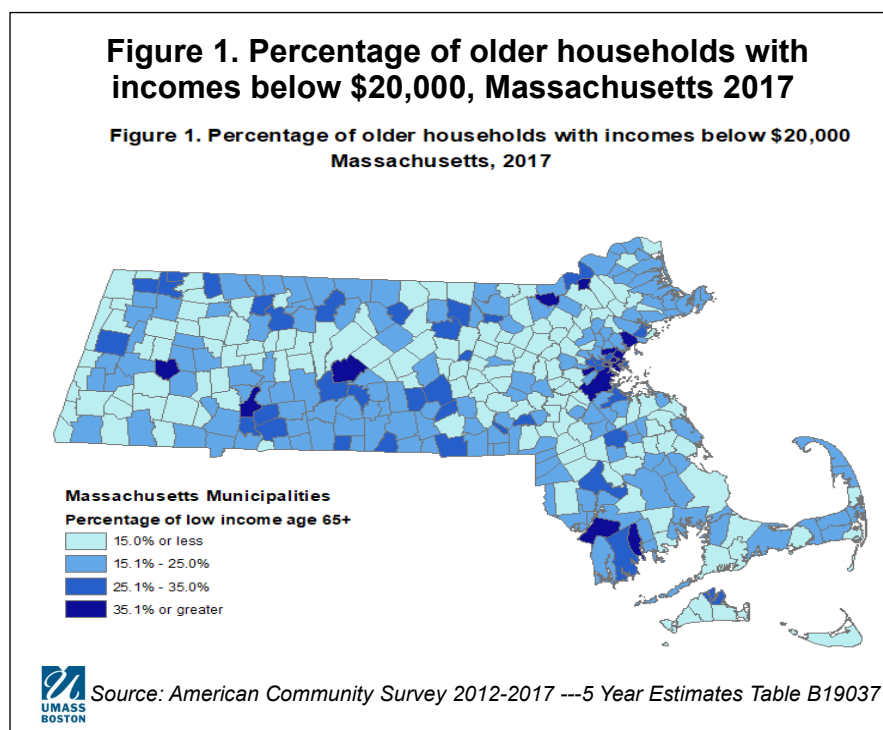
Approximately one of four older Massachusetts households have incomes below \$20,000.

Low-income households are heavily concentrated in communities with high population density, with the City of Boston having greatest number of low-income older adult households, followed by Worcester and Springfield .

Smaller municipalities as New Bedford and Fall River were next in number of low-income households headed by older adults.

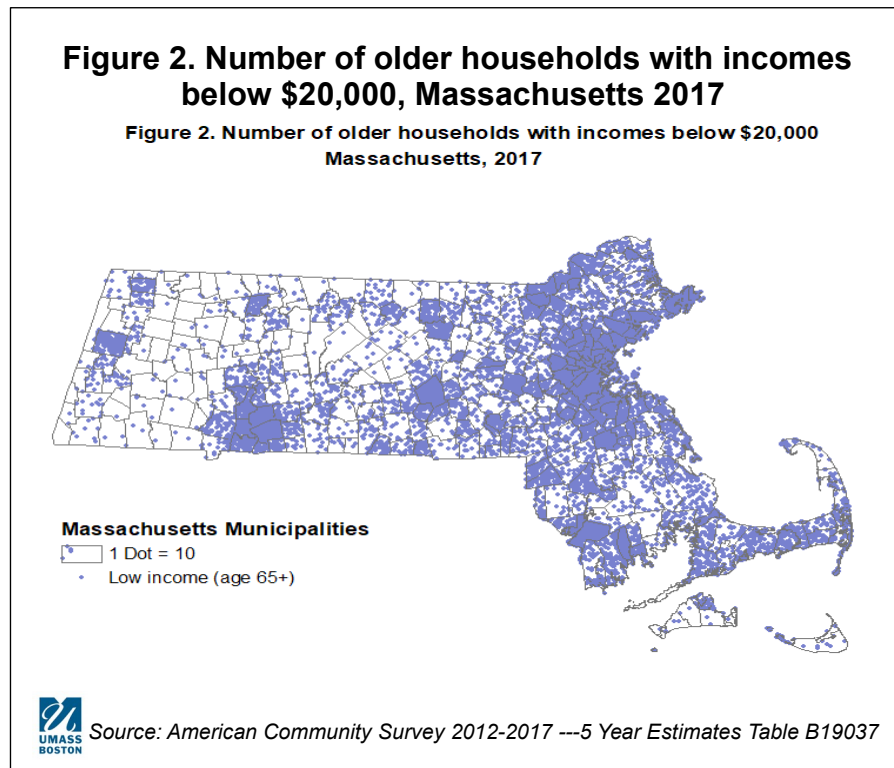
## Residents of Massachusetts, aged 65 and over

**Figure 1** shows the proportion of elder households that are low income by municipality. The percentages are divided into four categories, where a darker blue represents a higher percentage of older households within each municipality with income below \$20,000. High shares of older households are low income in major urban areas such as Boston, where 39% of households headed by older adults had low-income. Likewise, the proportion of older households with low-income was 34% and 33% of Worcester and Springfield, respectively.



Estimates based on data from the American Community Survey (2012-2017) show that across Massachusetts, about 143,500 of the households headed by an adult aged 65 and over live on an annual income below \$20,000, in 2017 dollars. This means that approximately one of four older Massachusetts households have incomes far below what is required to make ends meet.

**Figure 2** shows the prevalence of low-income older adult households, with each dot representing ten older adult households with incomes under \$20,000 annually (2017 dollars). The figure suggests that low-income households are heavily concentrated in communities with high population density, with the City of Boston having the greatest number of low-income older adult households (about 19,000), followed by Worcester and Springfield. Smaller municipalities such as New Bedford and Fall River were next in number of low-income older adult households.



Researchers at the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston developed the Elder Index™ to determine the minimum income necessary for older adults to live independently and cover daily expenses. The Elder Index calculates expenses of older adults for every county in the United States, and reflects the substantial differences in cost of living found in localities throughout the United States and Massachusetts. Recent results for Massachusetts suggest that cost of living for Massachusetts older adults is substantially higher than for older people in most other states, and partially as a result of those high expenses, more than six out of ten Massachusetts older adults living alone do not have sufficient income to make ends meet. For more information about the Elder Index, see [www.elderindex.org](http://www.elderindex.org).