

# Demographic Trends and Housing in the City of Newton, Massachusetts



**Northeastern University**  
*Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center  
for Urban and Regional Policy*

Barry Bluestone  
Tracy A. Corley  
May 2014

# **Dukakis Center Report #1**

## **Demographic Trends and Housing in the City of Newton, Massachusetts**

**Barry Bluestone  
Tracy A. Corley**

*With assistance from*  
**James Huessy**

**Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy  
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### **Introduction**

Settled in 1630, Newton, Massachusetts is a vibrant community comprised of 13 distinctive villages. The city is respected for its lovely neighborhoods, the quality of its schools, its extraordinary public library, and its devotion to the well-being of its residents. It has frequently been cited as one of the best communities to live in across America.

With a population of just over 85,000 residents in 2010 and approximately 31,000 occupied housing units, the City is home to three exceptional institutions of higher education: Boston College, Mount Ida, and Lasell.

The city covers 18.3 square miles and is magnificently located, bordering the communities of Boston, Brookline, Watertown, Waltham, Weston, Wellesley, and Needham, making it readily accessible to not only the “Hub” of the region, but surrounding communities also rich in amenities.

Newton is in a unique position in relation to the region as a whole. As this report will show, Newton has grown over the past decade, though not as rapidly as the rest of the region. Racial and ethnic diversity has increased over the past few decades, while its increasing median

household income makes Newton one of the most affluent populations in the Commonwealth. The dominance of high-priced, single-family homes makes the city attractive to more affluent populations and those who are starting families later in life.

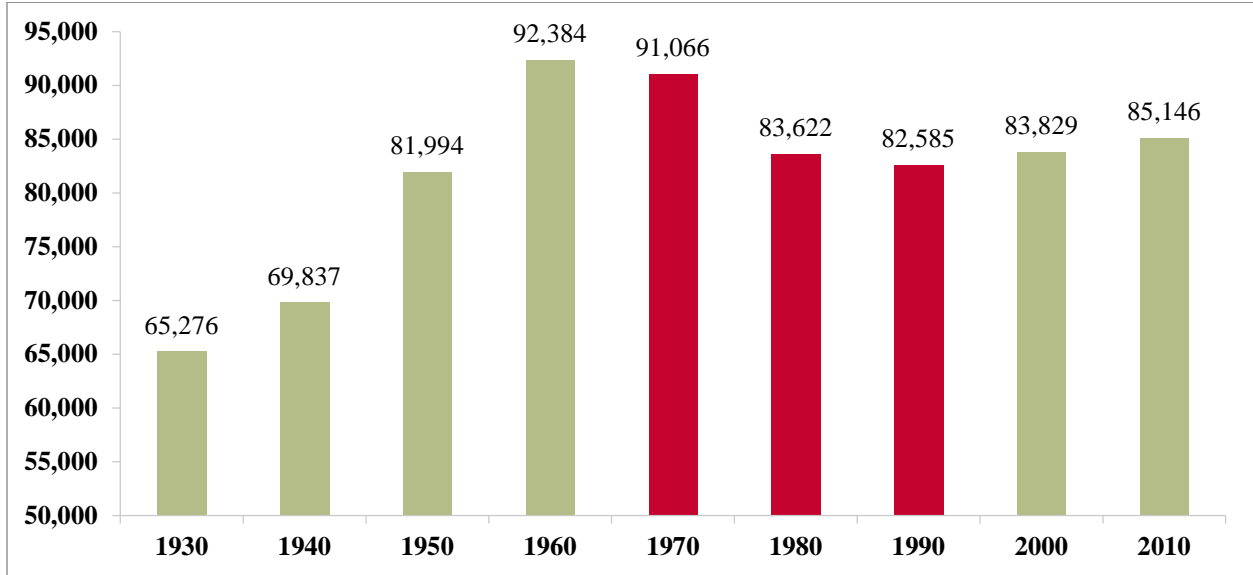
This report provides a demographic portrait of the City of Newton allowing us to better understand where the city is today. A second report will provide demographic projections that will provide some idea of what Newton might look like in the future.

### **Population Growth, Decline, and Revival**

Like many edge cities throughout the nation, Newton experienced explosive population growth between 1930 and 1960 as the rise in automobile ownership made it possible for families to leave central cities for the suburbs. Much of this growth occurred in the two decades after World War II with Newton's population surging from roughly 70,000 just before the war to more than 92,000 in 1960 – a growth spurt of more than 32 percent. But thereafter, as families sought housing even further from Boston, Newton's population actually declined. By 1980, the city had shrunk to about 83,600, a decline of nearly 10,000 residents. Indeed, by 1980, the city's population was about the same size as in 1950 and it has grown very slowly ever since (see **Figure 1**). The result was that while the state population was growing by nearly 17 percent between 1960 and 1990, Newton's was shrinking by nearly 11 percent (see **Figure 2**). As **Figure 3** demonstrates, the same pattern of growth and decline between Newton and the state also occurred between Newton and Middlesex County where the city is located.

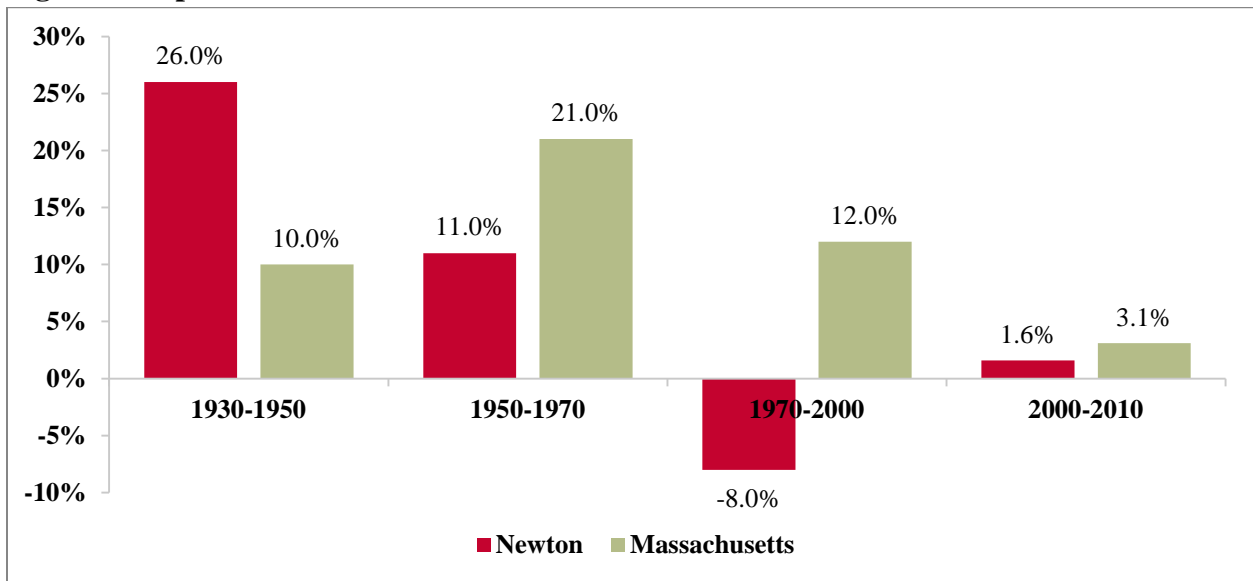
Since 2000, Newton's population has begun to grow again as an increasingly diverse population sees it as one of the premier places to live in Massachusetts given the quality of life in the community and the quality of its public schools. Nevertheless, these population increases have lagged behind both state and county growth. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of city residents increased by 1.6 percent, whereas the state and county grew roughly twice as fast, at rates of 3.1 and 2.6 percent, respectively.

**Figure 1: Population Growth City of Newton 1930-2010**



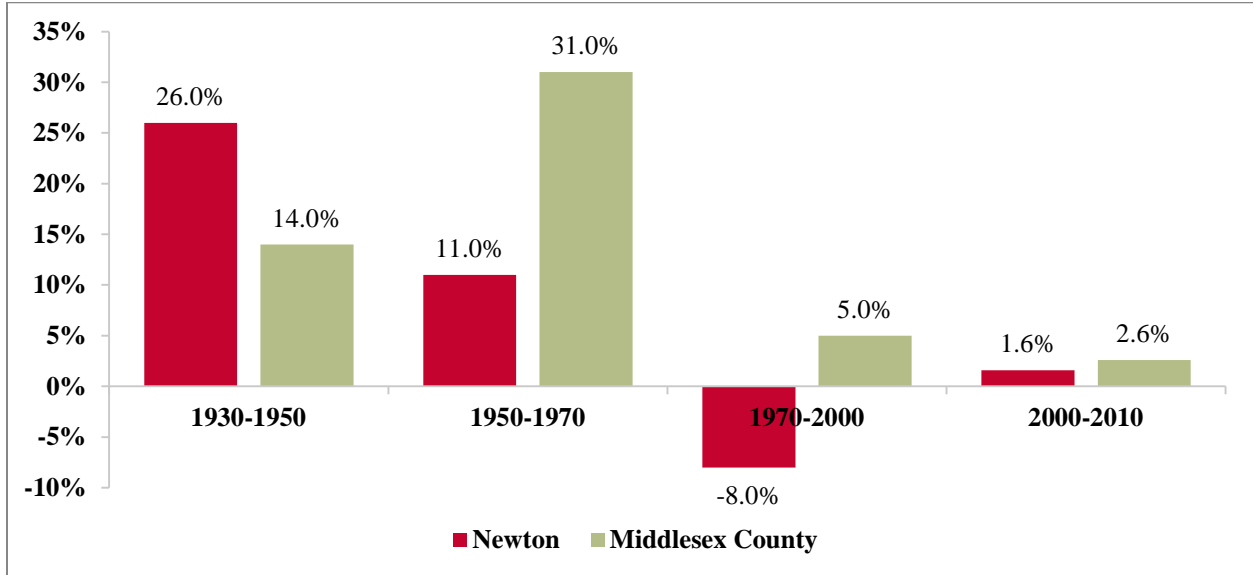
Source: State Data Center, MISER and U.S. Census American FactFinder

**Figure 2: Population Growth Newton vs Massachusetts 1930-2010**



Source: State Data Center, MISER and U.S. Census American Factfinder

**Figure 3: Population Growth Newton vs. Middlesex County 1930-2010**

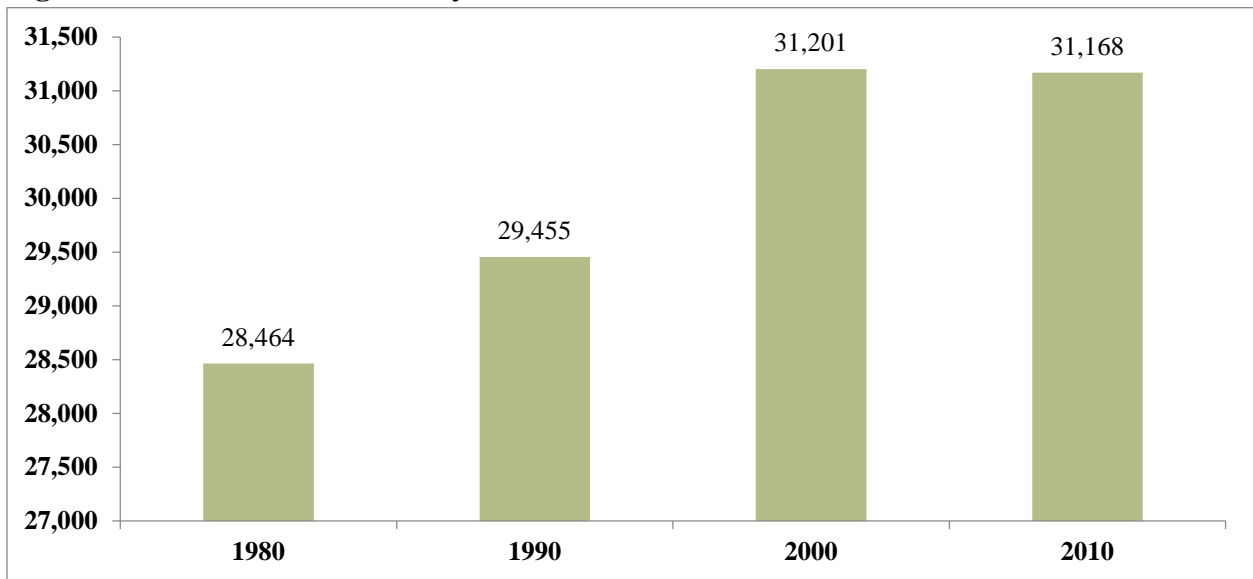


Source: State Data Center, MISER and U.S. Census American Factfinder

*Household Growth*

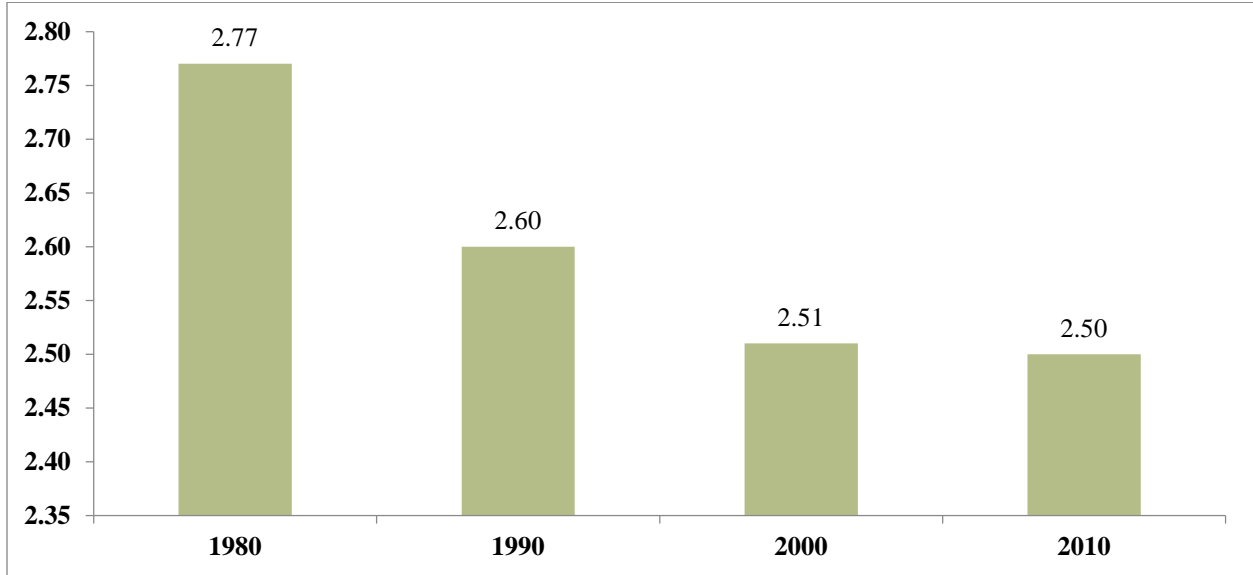
While the population of the city shrank between 1960 and 1990, the number of households continued to increase each decade until 2000 as the average size of a Newton household declined faster than the number of residents (see **Figure 4**). In 1980, the average household in Newton had 2.77 members. By 1990, the average size was down to 2.6; in 2000, it was 2.51 and has held pretty steady since then (see **Figure 5**)

**Figure 4: Household Growth City of Newton 1980-2010**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 - 2010)

**Figure 5: Average Household Size City of Newton 1980-2010**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980–2010)

The shrinking average size of households in Newton can be attributed to three factors: (1) the aging of the town’s Baby Boom generation, many of whom have become empty-nesters (2) an increase in the number of single person households, and (3) a decline in the number of children in younger households.

At the same time, the number of Newton residents living in group quarters has increased. We can attribute this to a greater percentage of the population living in housing including college dormitories, skilled nursing facilities, and religious group quarters. As one can see in **Table 1**, the percentage of Newton residents living in group quarters has increased from 5.7 percent in 1980 to 8.3 percent in 2010.

**Table 1** Newton residents living in group quarters

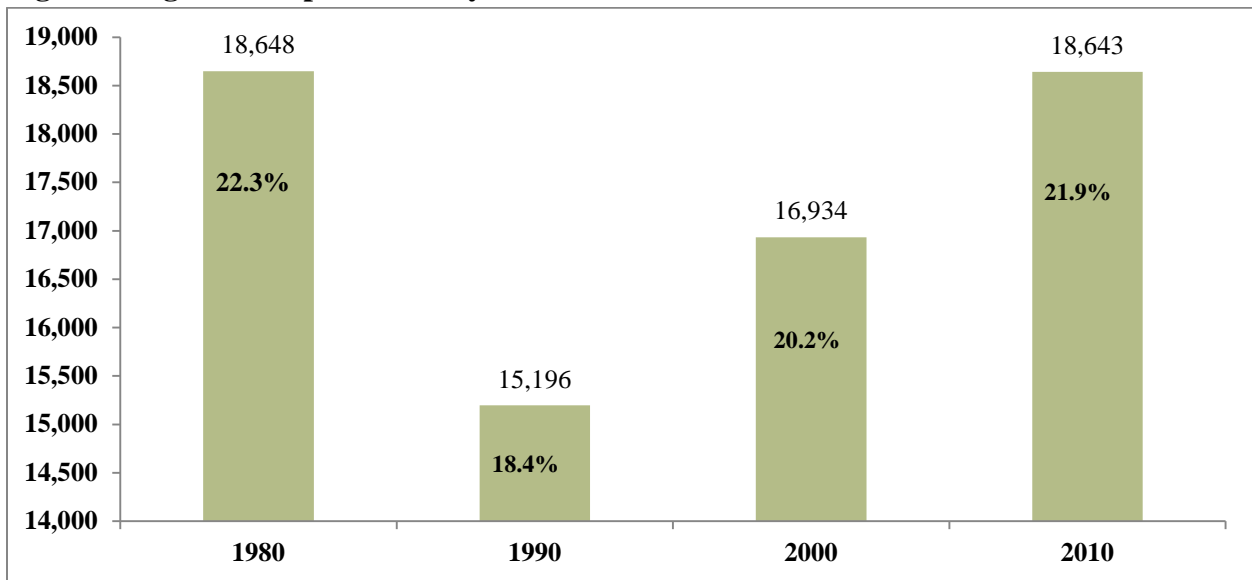
	Total in Group Quarters	% of Population in Group Quarters
<b>1980</b>	4,777	5.7%
<b>1990</b>	6,002	7.3%
<b>2000</b>	5,578	6.7%
<b>2010</b>	7,103	8.3%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 - 2010)

### *The Age of the Newton Population*

Newton is a highly desirable community for young families. In 1980, families with children dominated the housing landscape, and in that year more than 18,600 of the city’s residents (22.3%) were between the ages of 5 and 19. The number of residents in this school-age group declined sharply in the following decade, falling by nearly 19 percent, to 15,196 in 1990. The following two decades, however, saw a reversal in this trend as the number of residents in this age group increased to 16,934 in 2000 (+11.4%) and then increased another 12 percent to 18,643 in 2010. As such, by the last decennial census, the number of school-age children in Newton was virtually back to its peak 1980 level. Once again, approximately 22 percent of the city’s population was of school age (see **Figure 6**).

**Figure 6: Age 5-19 Population City of Newton 1980-2010**

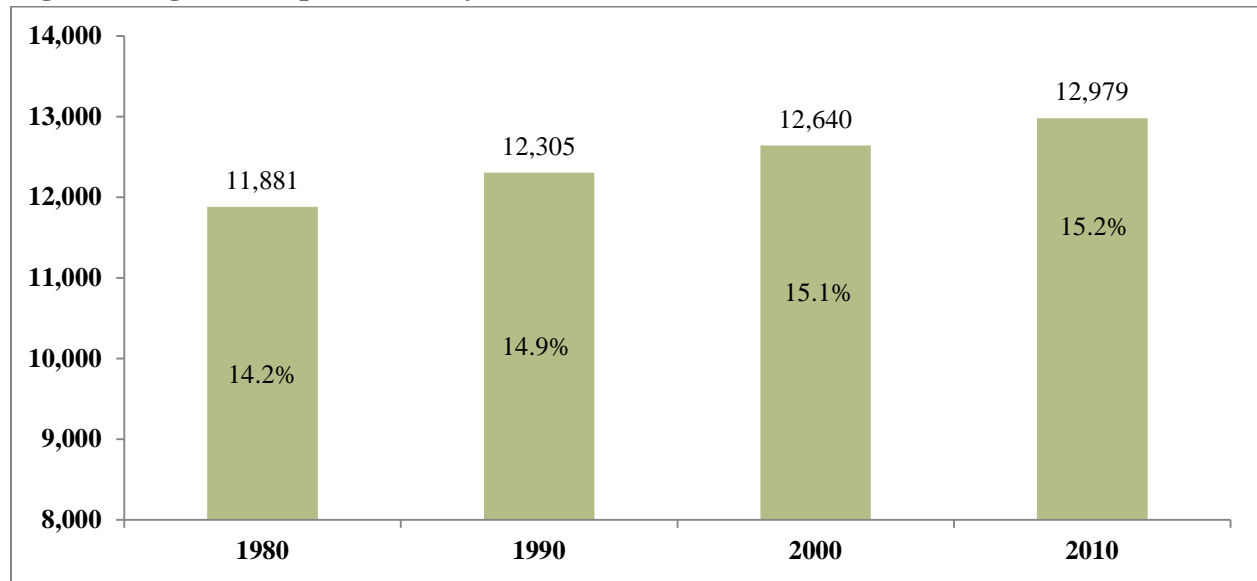


*Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 - 2010)*

While the school-age population is rebounding in Newton, the ranks of seniors aged 65+ has been increasing continually since at least 1980. Then, there were about 11,900 older residents, comprising 14.2 percent of the city’s population. By 2010, the total was close to 13,000 and represented 15.2 percent of all residents (see **Figure 7**). Most of this increase is largely the result of residents aging in place and is consistent with the aging of the overall Commonwealth population. In 2010, 13.8 percent of the state’s population was age 65+, slightly lower than the percent in Newton.

Overall, the proportion of the population aged 20 to 64 years old in 2010 (62.9%) is very close to the proportion in 1980 (63.5%) making the overall age structure of Newton today not far different from what it was thirty years ago.

**Figure 7: Age 65+ Population City of Newton 1980-2010**

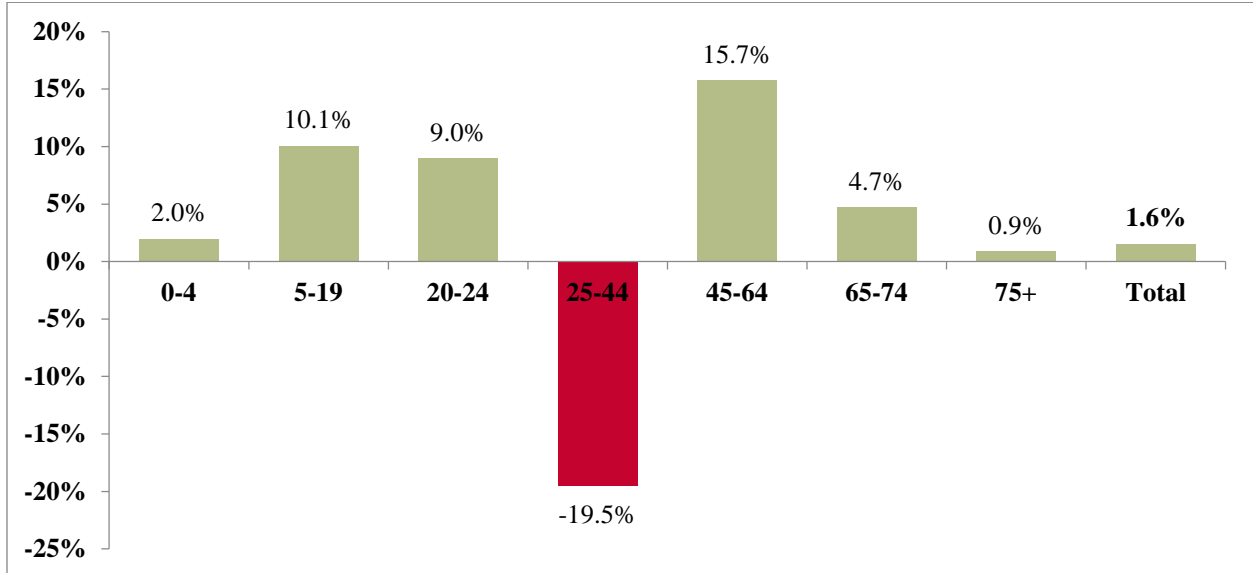


*Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 - 2010)*

**Figure 8** summarizes the changes in the age structure of Newton's population over the past decade. What is most outstanding is the decline in the young prime age population (age 25-44). This important cohort has declined by nearly 20 percent as many of those in 2000 remained in Newton through 2010, but were now ten years older. This accounts for the large increase in the older prime age population (age 45-64). Again, so far, there has been little growth in the older population, but assuming that many of those aged 45-64 in 2010 remain in the city, we can expect a big boost in the 65+ age cohort over the next two decades.



**Figure 8: Percentage Change in Age Cohorts City of Newton 2000-2010**

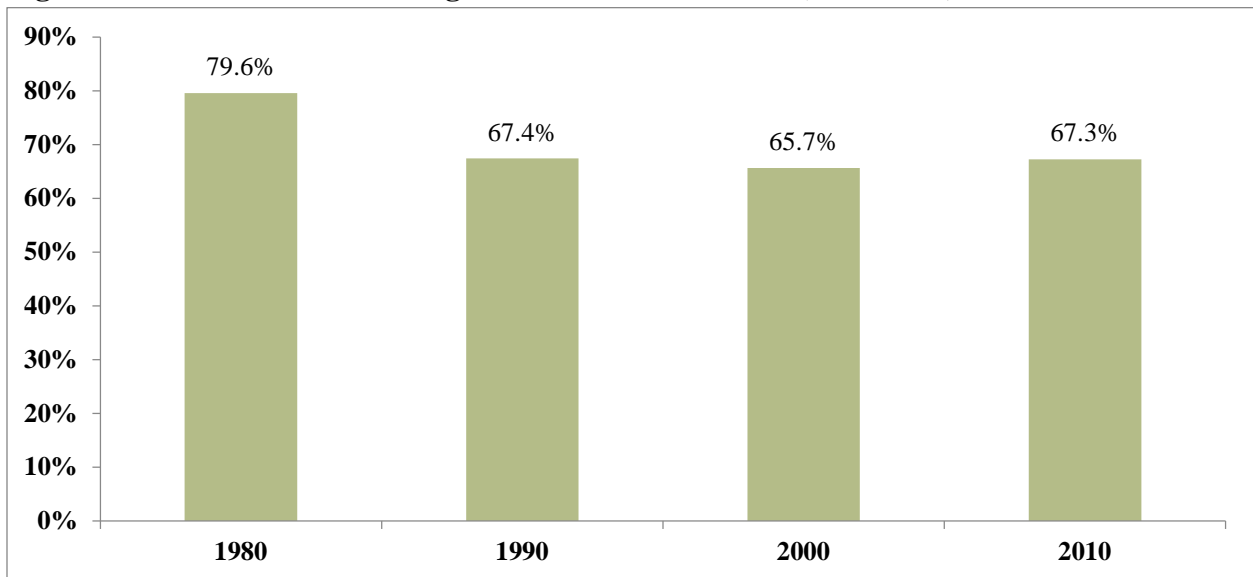


Source: U.S. Decennial Census (2000 - 2010)

### *Families in Newton*

Between 1980 and 1990, Newton's household structure shifted rather dramatically. Family households, which in 1980 had accounted for almost 80 percent of all households, made up just 67 percent in 2010 (see **Figure 9**).

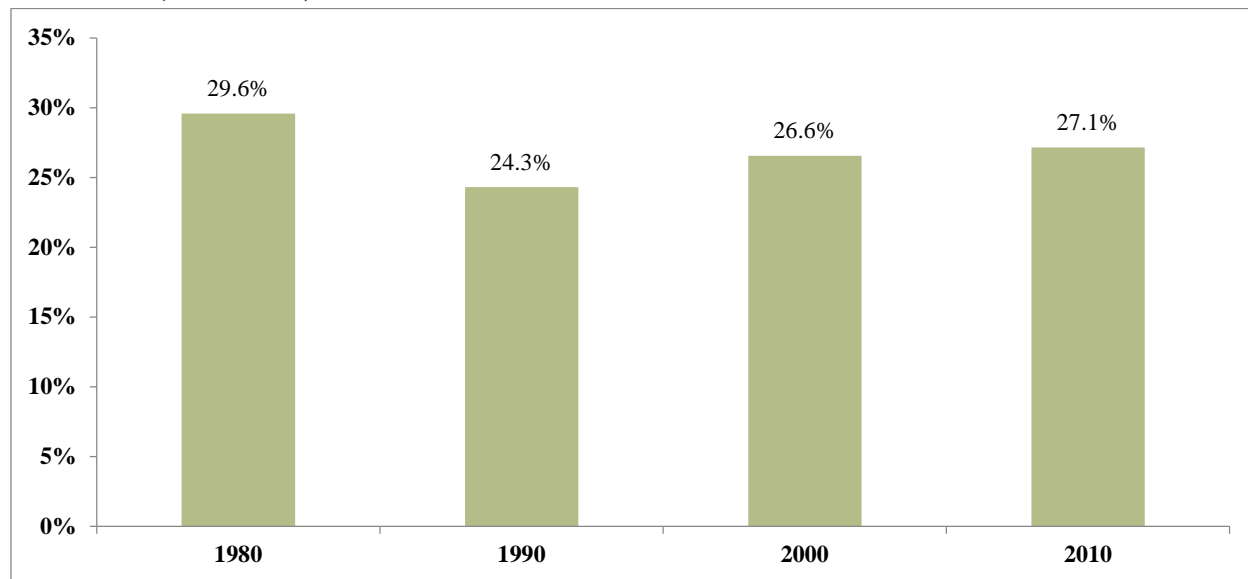
**Figure 9: Families as a Percentage of Newton Households (1980-2010)**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 - 2010)

The proportion of households made up of married-couple families with children declined between 1980 and 1990, but has been on an upward trajectory ever since. These traditional nuclear family households comprised 29.6 percent of all households in Newton in 1980, but dropped to roughly a quarter in 1990. Married couple families with school aged children has nearly recovered, comprising 27.1 percent of all households in 2010 (see **Figure 10**).

**Figure 10 Married Couple Families with Children as a Proportion of Newton Households (1980-2010)**



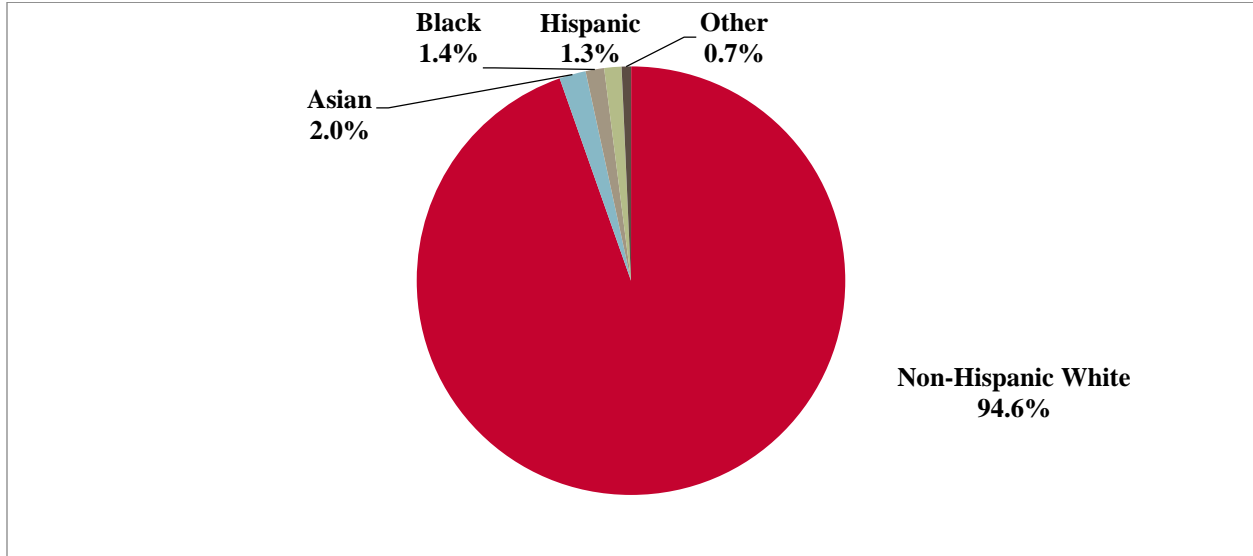
*Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 –2010)*

In place of the traditional family, Newton, like most of Massachusetts and the nation, is increasingly comprised of a diverse arrangement of household types. Since 1980, the number of single-person households has increased as well as the number of households comprised of unrelated individuals – unmarried couples and households made up of roommates. In addition, the percentage of residents living in group quarters has increased significantly. These non-family households have comprised about one-third of Newton’s households since 1990.

### *Racial and Ethnic Trends*

Age is not the only dimension along which the demographic character of Newton has been changing. The city, traditionally a relatively affluent and white enclave, has become more racially and ethnically diverse since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the U.S. Census, in 1980 only 1.4 percent of residents in Newton were African-Americans. The numbers of Asians comprised about 2 percent of Newton’s population. Hispanics were just 1.3 percent of the population. Indeed, in 1980, 94.6 percent of Newton’s population was white (see **Figure 11**).

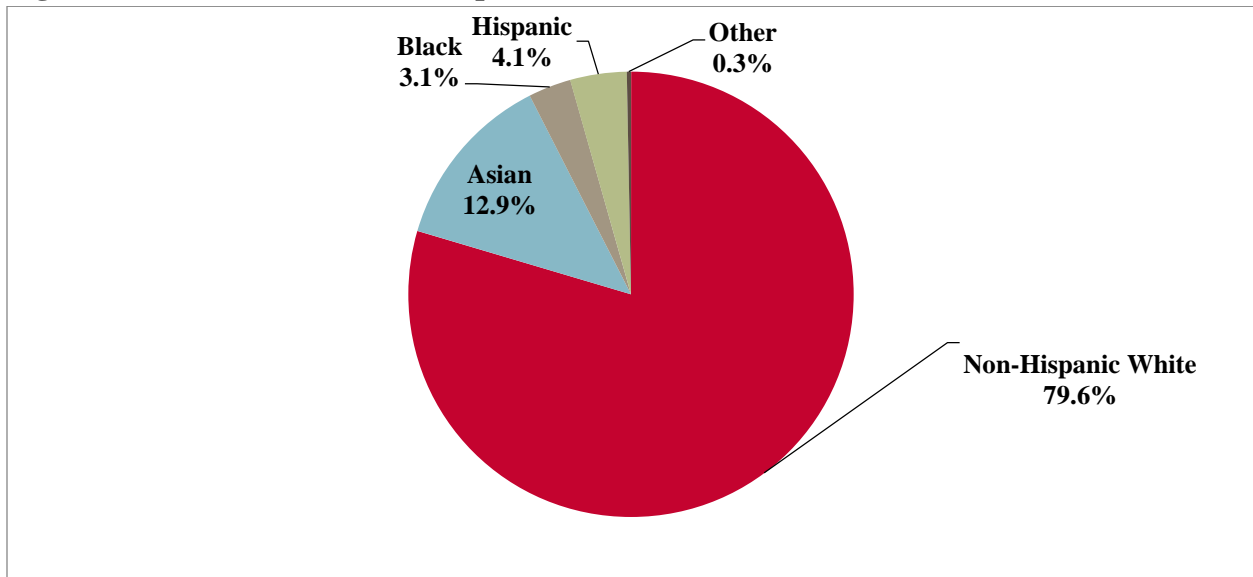
**Figure 11: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Newton 1980**



*Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 –2010)*

The town’s racial and ethnic diversity increased steadily over the next three decades, with the Asian population growing the fastest to comprise nearly 13 percent of Newton’s population in 2010 (see **Figure 12**). Hispanics now comprise 4.1 percent of the city’s population and blacks 3.1 percent. In 2010, the number of Asians in Newton was close to 11,000, up from less than 1,700 in 1980. There are now close to 3,500 Hispanics and more than 2,600 African-Americans. As such, non-white and Hispanic households now comprise more than one-fifth of the city’s population.

**Figure 12: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Newton 2010**



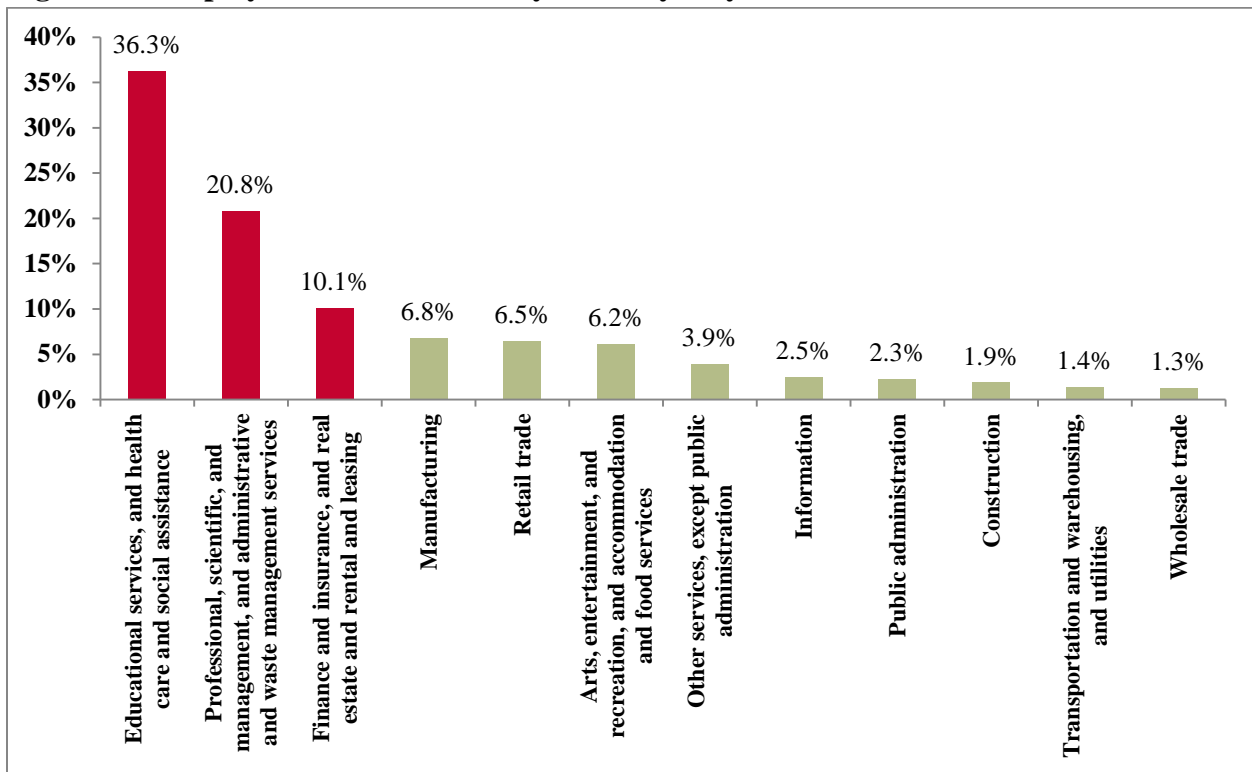
*Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980 –2010)*

### Industry, Occupation, and Income Characteristics

Newton is a city of white collar workers, most of whom are professionals. As **Figure 13** reveals, two-thirds (67.2%) of its residents work in three major industries: Education, Health Care, and Social Services; Professional, Scientific, and Managerial companies, and Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate. By comparison, less than half (48.1%) of the Commonwealth's workforce is found in these three industries.

More than 70 percent (70.2%) of Newton's residents work in occupations related to management, business, science, and the arts compared with just 43.2% of the state-wide workforce.

**Figure 13: Employment of Residents by Industry City of Newton 2010**

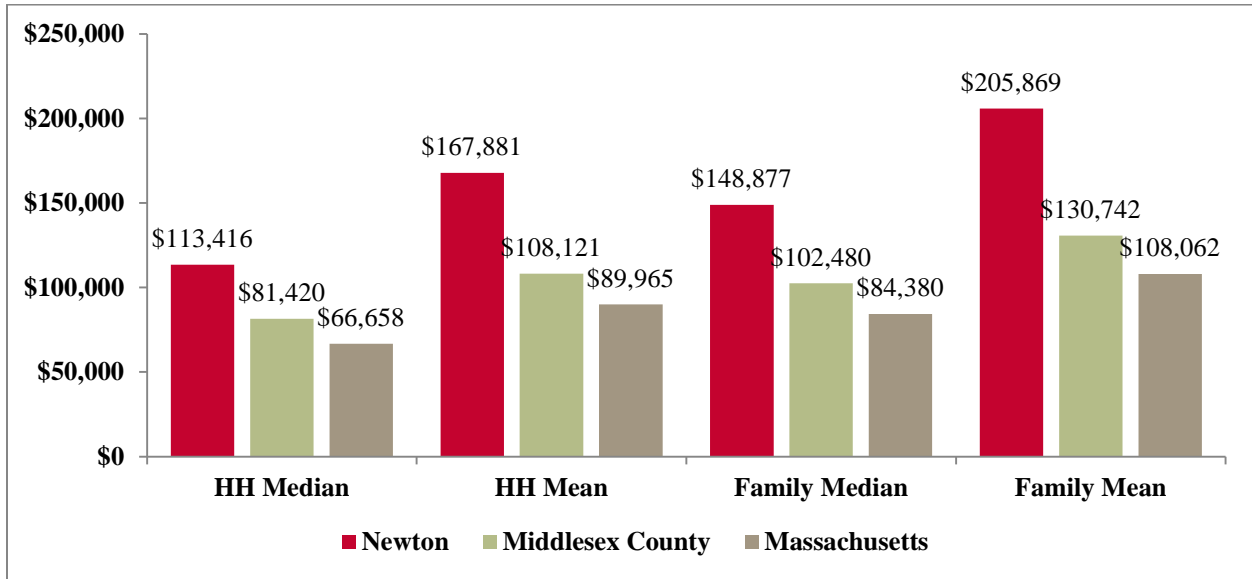


Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2010

As a result, Newton's households are among the most affluent in the Commonwealth. In 2010, median household income was \$113,416 with a mean significantly higher at \$167,881. Family households were even wealthier with a median income of \$148,877 and a mean that exceeded \$205,000. As an analysis of **Figure 14** demonstrates, Newton's median household income is 39 percent higher than the median in Middlesex County and 70 percent higher than the median in the Commonwealth. Because of a substantial number of high-earning households, Newton's

mean household income eclipses the county and the state by even more: 55 percent and 87 percent, respectively.

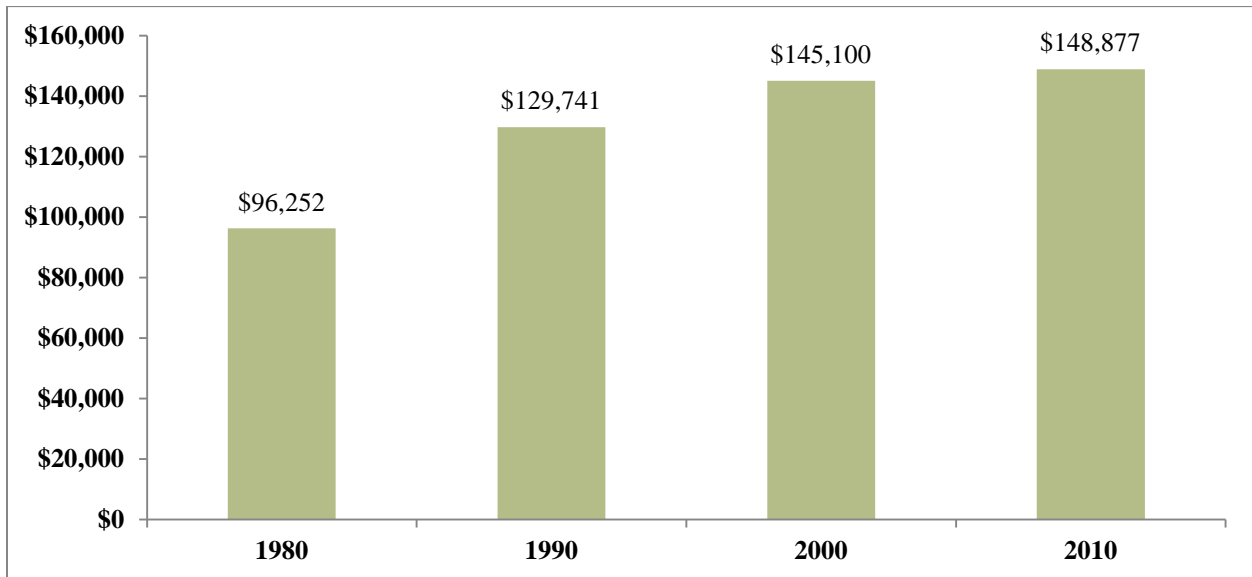
**Figure 14: Household and Family Income Newton vs. Middlesex County vs. Massachusetts 2010**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2010

Moreover, Newton families have seen their real incomes rise over the past three decades, particularly between 1980 and 2000, as **Figure 15** reveals.

**Figure 15: Median Family Income City of Newton 1980-2010 (Adjusted for 2010 Dollars)**



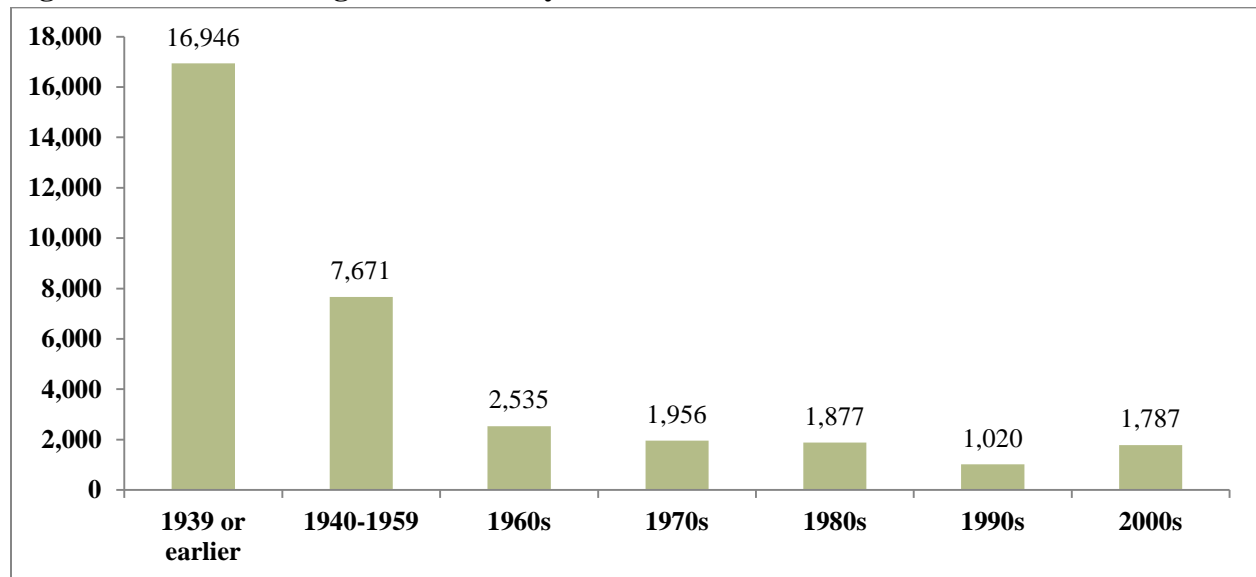
Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1980–2010)

Nonetheless, there are households in Newton which are living on a lot less. While nearly 27 percent of resident households have incomes exceeding \$200,000 a year, nearly one out of eight Newton households (12.2%) are surviving on less than \$25,000 a year. While 40 percent of married couple households have incomes in excess of \$200,000, more than one out of six (17%) non-family households share incomes of no more than \$25,000.

***Housing in Newton: Retaining Suburban Traditions, Accommodating Demographic Shifts***

In 2010, Newton had 32,648 housing units of which about 31,000 are occupied. As **Figure 16** indicates, more than half (52.8%) of these were built before 1940. Another quarter (23.9%) was built between 1940 and 1959 to accommodate the post-World War II move to the suburbs. More than 90 percent of today’s housing stock in the city was built before 1990.

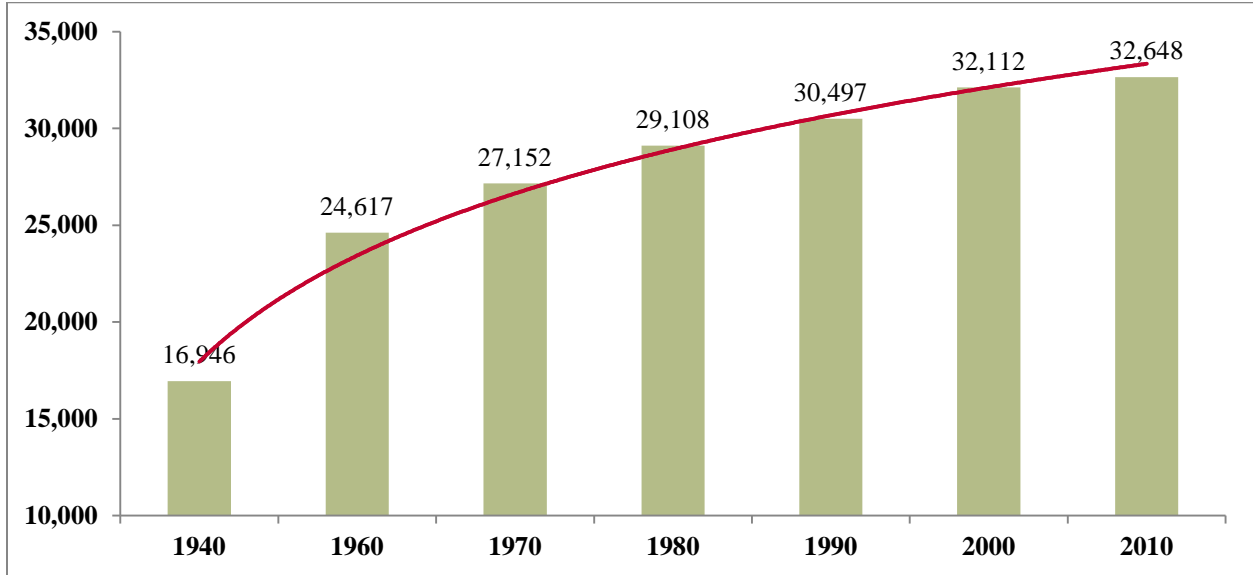
**Figure 16: Year Housing Unit Built City of Newton**



Source: *Infoplease.com*

As such, **Figure 17** provides data on the size of the city’s total housing stock from 1940 through 2010.

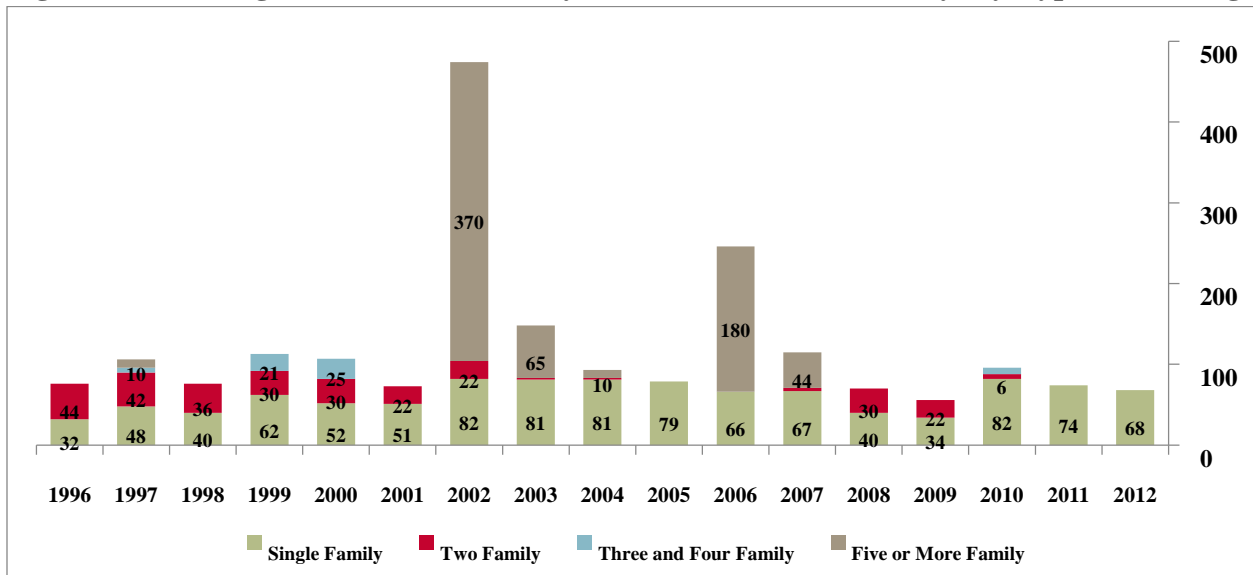
**Figure 17: Number of Housing Units City of Newton 1940-2010**



Source: U.S. Decennial Census (1940–2010)

What is equally important has been the shift in the type of housing in the city. Between 1996 and 2001, Newton added 285 single-family homes; 260 duplex, triple-deckers, and four-plex units; and only 10 units in apartment/condominium style 5+ unit buildings (see **Figure 18**).

**Figure 18: Housing Units Built in the City of Newton 1996–2013 (July) by Type of Housing**



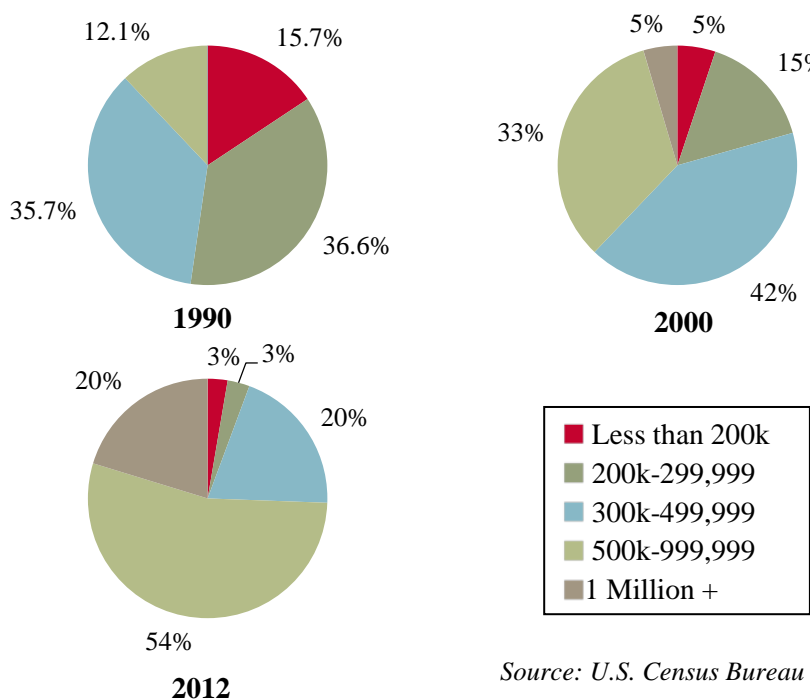
Source: U.S. Census Building Permit Survey

As such, over half (51.4%) of the new units added during this period were additions to the single-family housing stock in the city. During the following five-year period (2002-2007), there was a virtual housing boom in Newton with 456 more single-family homes permitted, but for the first time a large amount of large multi-family housing was constructed – 669 units in all. As such, apartments and condos in these 5+ unit buildings comprised 57 percent of the new housing stock. Finally, in the final five period ending in 2012, single-family construction continued apace with 298 new units, but there were no longer any large scale projects constructed at all. Newton was back to its traditional form of new construction: single-family homes.

*Home Values and Sales Prices*

As the population of Newton has grown more affluent, the housing stock has become more and more expensive. This, of course, is a reciprocal process: wealthier residents have bid up home prices, while those escalating prices have placed homes out of reach for many buyers with moderate incomes. In 1990, the modal home price category in Newton was \$200,000–\$299,999; approximately 37 percent of all homes in Newton were valued in this range, though a nearly equal proportion had a home value in the price category between \$300,000–\$499,000 (see **Figure 19**). By 2000, the modal category had shifted firmly to the \$300,000-\$499,999; about 42 percent of homes in that year were valued in this range. By 2012, the modal category had once again moved upward, to \$500,000–\$999,999. More than half of all homes in Newton that year were in this value range. At the high end of the market, more than one in five homes in Newton were valued above \$1 million in 2012; by contrast, only about 3 percent of homes were valued at less than \$200,000.

**Figure 19: Median Home Values in Newton 1990-2012**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Between 2003 and 2007, the median selling price of a Newton single-family home increased from \$637,750 to \$752,500, an increase of nearly 18 percent. With the beginning of the Great Recession in early 2008, home prices fell nearly everywhere across the country. In Greater Boston, the median selling price declined by nearly 9 percent between 2007 and 2009 and still had not recovered fully to its 2007 peak by 2013. In contrast, in Newton after declining from its 2007 peak, the median selling price hit all-time new highs in 2012 and soared to \$855,000 in 2013 (see **Figure 20**).

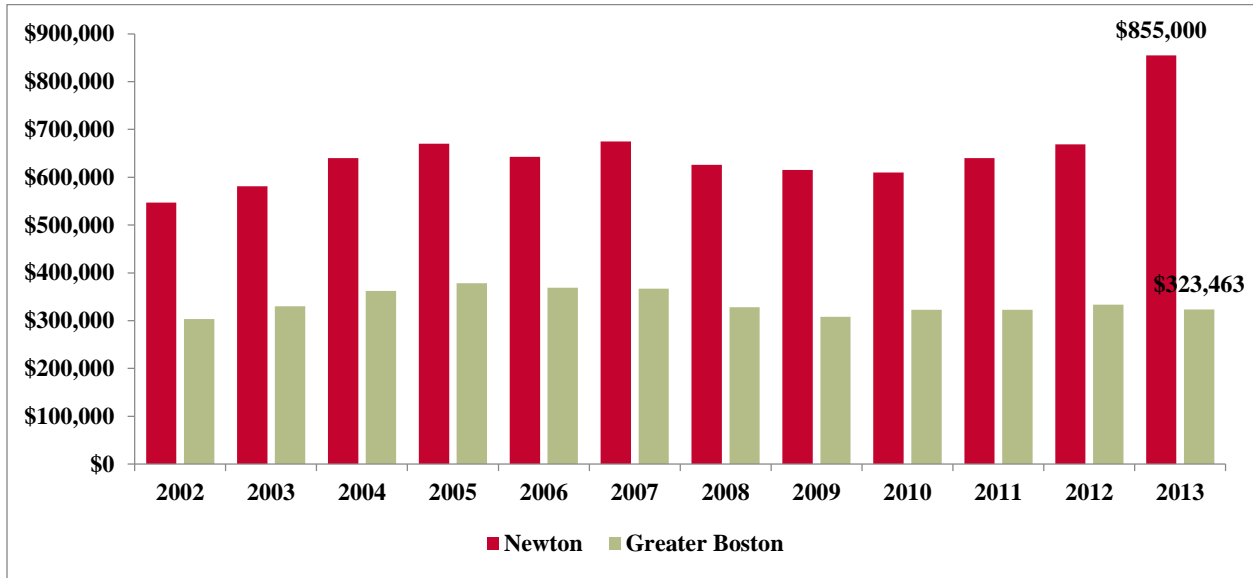
**Figure 20: Median Single-Family Home Selling Price City of Newton 2003-2013**



Source: *The Warren Group*

Data from the Warren Group provide monthly and annual information on the median price of homes sold in each municipality in Massachusetts, permitting us to compare Newton to other municipalities. Among the 161 communities in Greater Boston in the first half of 2013, the median price for a single-family home ranged from \$173,000 in the City of Lawrence to \$1,250,000 in the Town of Brookline. But as **Figure 21** demonstrates, the median selling price for single-family homes in Newton has dramatically outpaced the median for the entire region since at least 2002 and the gap has been accelerating since 2010. By 2013, the median price of a Newton residence was more than 2.6 times the median for all Greater Boston communities.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 21: Single-Family Home Median Selling Price, 2002–2013 (June) Newton vs. Greater Boston**

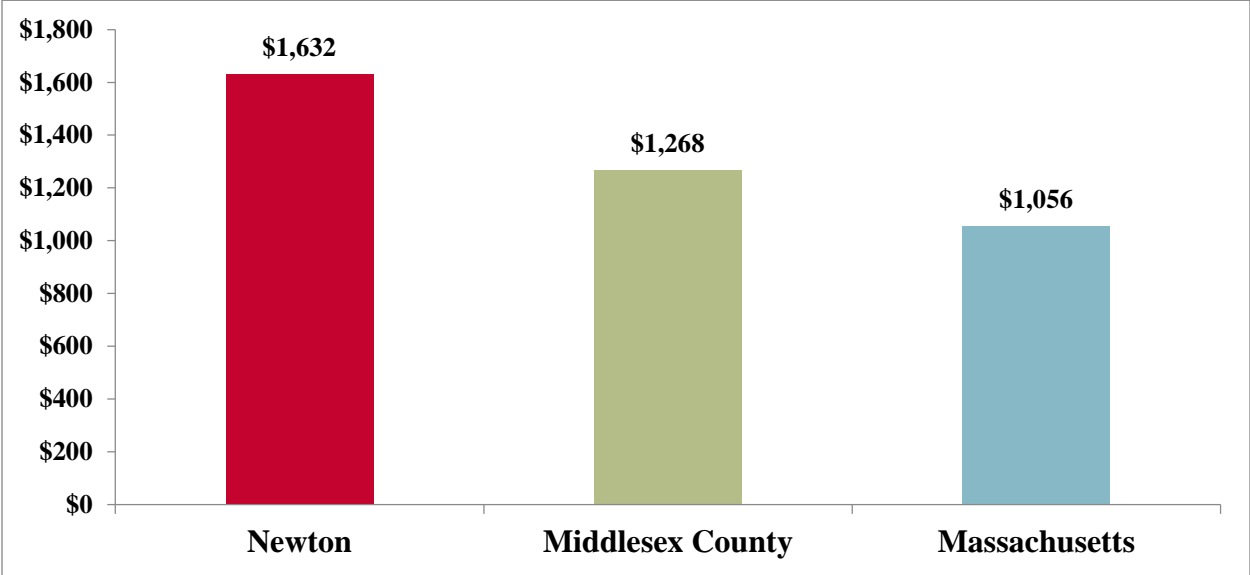


Source: Warren Group

### Rental Costs

According to the American Community Survey for 2008-2012, median housing rent in Newton was \$1,632 per month. This was 29 percent higher than median rent in Middlesex County and 55 percent higher than the median for the state as a whole (see **Figure 22**). Because of the high rents charged in the city, more than 45 percent of Newton renters are paying 30 percent or more of their gross income for housing, despite the relative affluence of the city. This compares with 46 percent of renters in Middlesex County paying this much of their monthly income in monthly rent with half (50.3%) of the state’s renters shelling out this share of their income for housing.

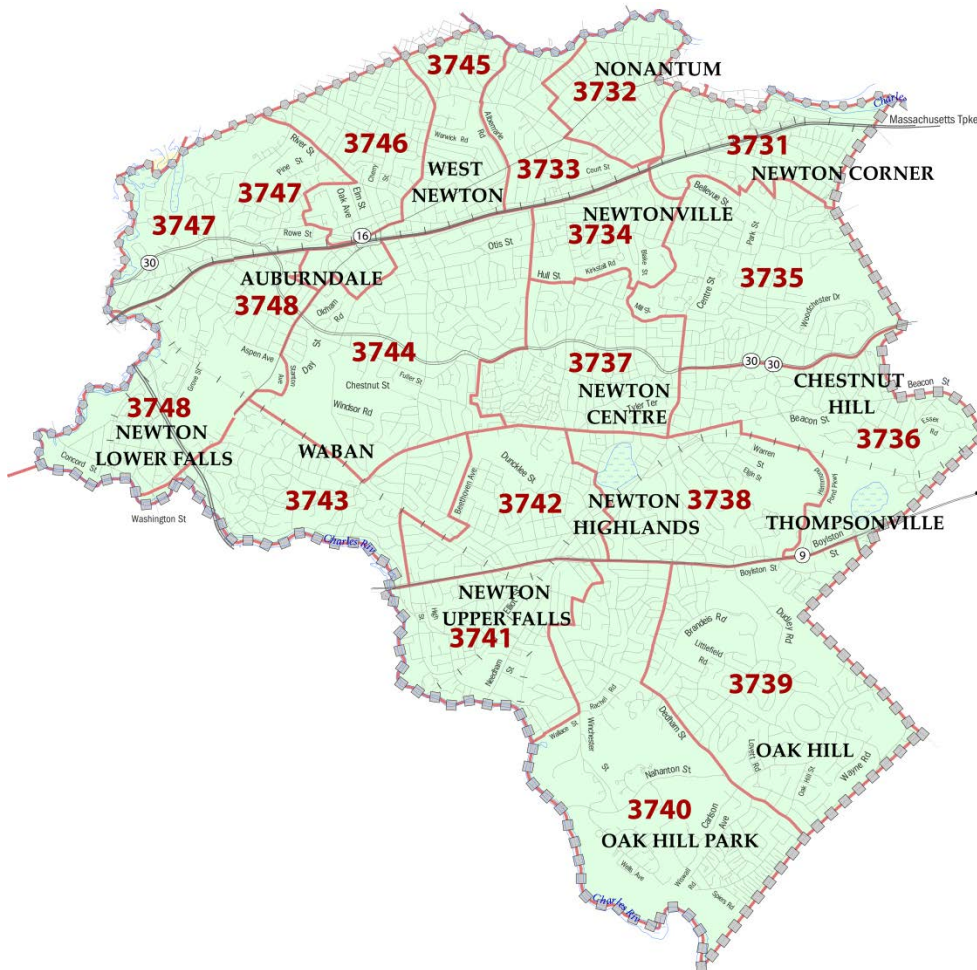
**Figure 22: Median Housing Rent City of Newton 2008-2012**



Source: American Community Survey (2008-2012)

*A Closer Look at the City of Newton by Census Tract*

Like most municipalities, Newton is home to diverse residents and communities. To examine this diversity, we turn to data for the 18 census tracts within the city.<sup>2</sup>



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau's MAF/TIGER database (TAB10ST25) and City of Newton Map Library*

Thirteen of Newton's 18 census tracts share borders with other cities in the Greater Boston area.

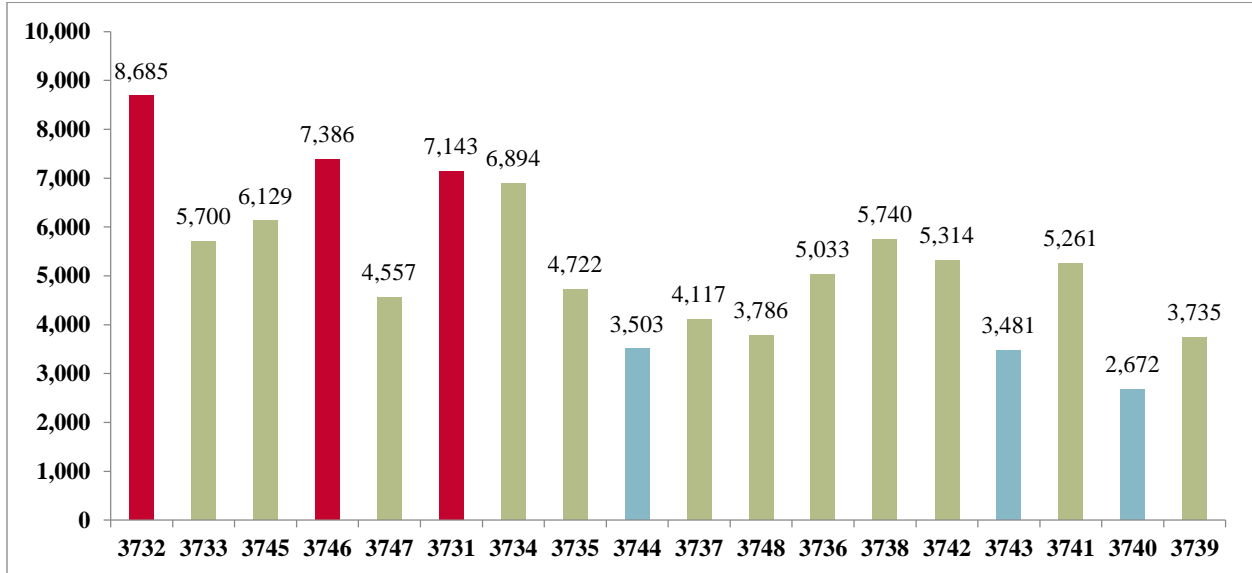
- Tracts 3731, 3735, and 3736 border the City of Boston at Brighton and include the villages of Newton Corner, parts of Newtonville, and Chestnut Hill and include the villages of Oak Hill and Oak Hill Park.
- Tracts 3739 and 3740 border the City of Boston at West Roxbury.
- Tracts 3739 and 3736 border the City of Brookline and include the villages of Oak Hill, Thompsonville, and Most of Chestnut Hill.
- Tracts 3740 (Oak Hill Park and parts of Newton Highlands) and 3741 (Newton Upper Falls) share a border with Needham.
- Tract 3743 and 3748 share a border with Wellesley; 3748 also shares a border with Weston along with tract 3747. This area includes the villages of Newton Lower Falls, Waban, and parts of Auburndale.
- Tracts 3745, 3746, and 3747 share a border with Waltham and include the villages of West Newton and Auburndale.
- Tract 3745 also shares a border with Watertown, along with tracts 3733, 3732, and 3731, which encompass the villages of West Newton, Nonantum, Newton Corner and parts of Newtonville.

The five interior census tracts—3742, 3738, 3737, 3734, and 3744— include the villages of Newton Highlands, Newton Centre, Newtonville, and parts of Waban, Auburndale, and West Newton.

### *Population Density*

As **Figure 23** reveals, density varies dramatically within Newton. The Nonantum tract (3732), covering just one half of a square mile, has a density of nearly 8,700 residents per square mile -- roughly 3.2 times the density of the Oak Hill Park tract (3740) with the lowest density. Besides Nonantum, the two other densest tracts are 3746 in West Newton and 3731 in Newton Corner. Sharing honors for least dense are 3743 in Waban and 3744 which is part of Auburndale.

**Figure 23: City of Newton Population Density (Persons/Square Mile) 2010 by Census Tract**

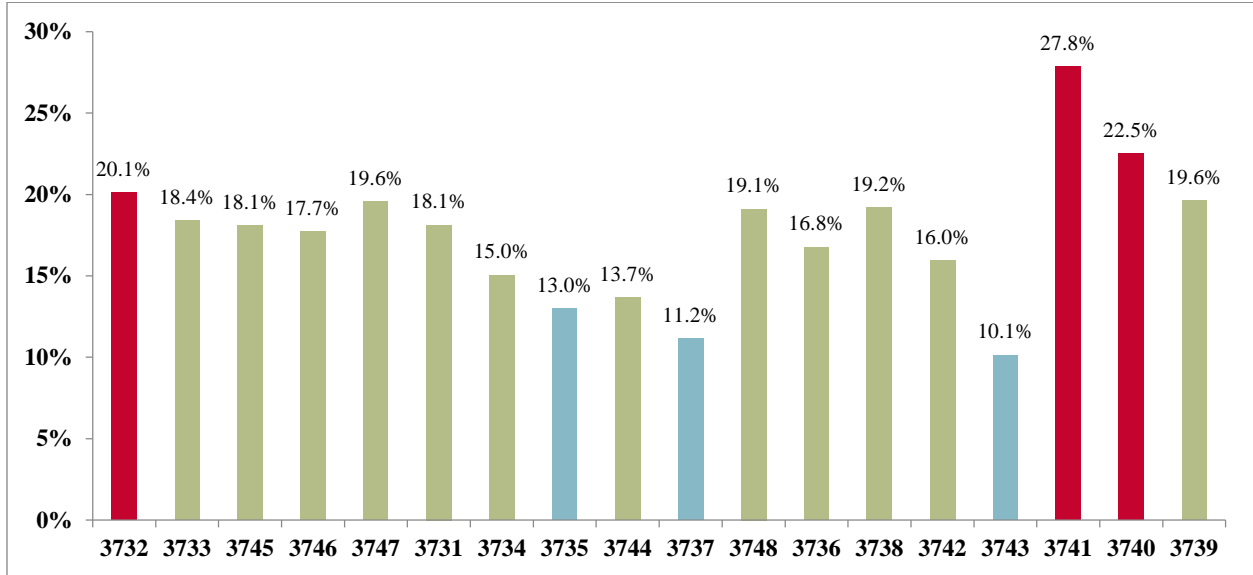


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

*Racial and Ethnic Diversity by Census Tract*

Diversity varies across the City of Newton as shown in **Figure 24**. The most dense census tract located in Nonantum (3732) is among the most diverse with just over one in five residents being African-American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or multiracial. However, the most racially and ethnically diverse tract is 3741 in Newton Upper Falls with 22.5 percent of its residents non-white. Oak Hill Park (Census Tract 3740) has the second highest concentration of non-white residents, followed by the Nonantum tract. Each of these tracts has at least twice the non-white proportion of tract 3743 in Waban at 10.1 percent. The other two tracts with relatively few non-whites are in Newton Centre (3737) and the eastern part of Newtonville (3735). Just as there appears to be no correlation between density and diversity, the distance from the City of Boston bears no relation to population diversity.

**Figure 24: City of Newton Percent Non-White 2010 by Census Tract**

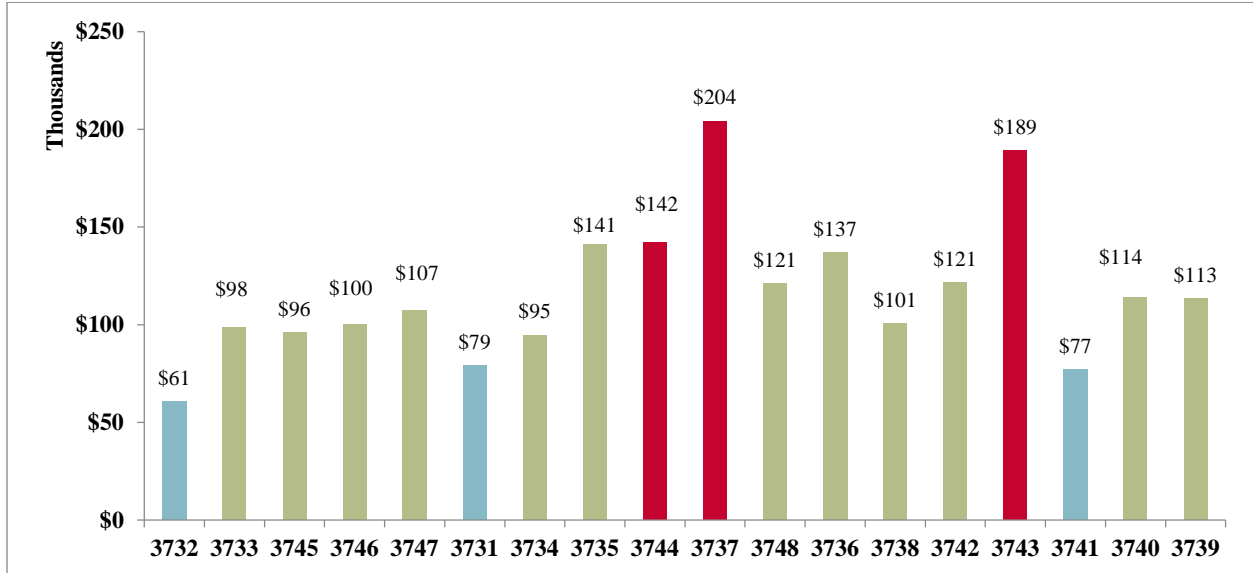


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

*Household Income by Census Tract*

What may surprise those who do not know Newton well is the large variance in household income within the city. As **Figure 25** demonstrates, median household income in 2010 varied from a low of \$60,729 in the census tract 3732 in Nonantum to a high of \$204,156 in tract 3737 in Newton Centre. Thus the median household in the richest tract had nearly 3.4 times the income of the median household in the poorest. The two other wealthiest tracts are found in Waban (\$189,265) and in Auburndale (\$142,105).

**Figure 25: City of Newton Median Household Income 2010**

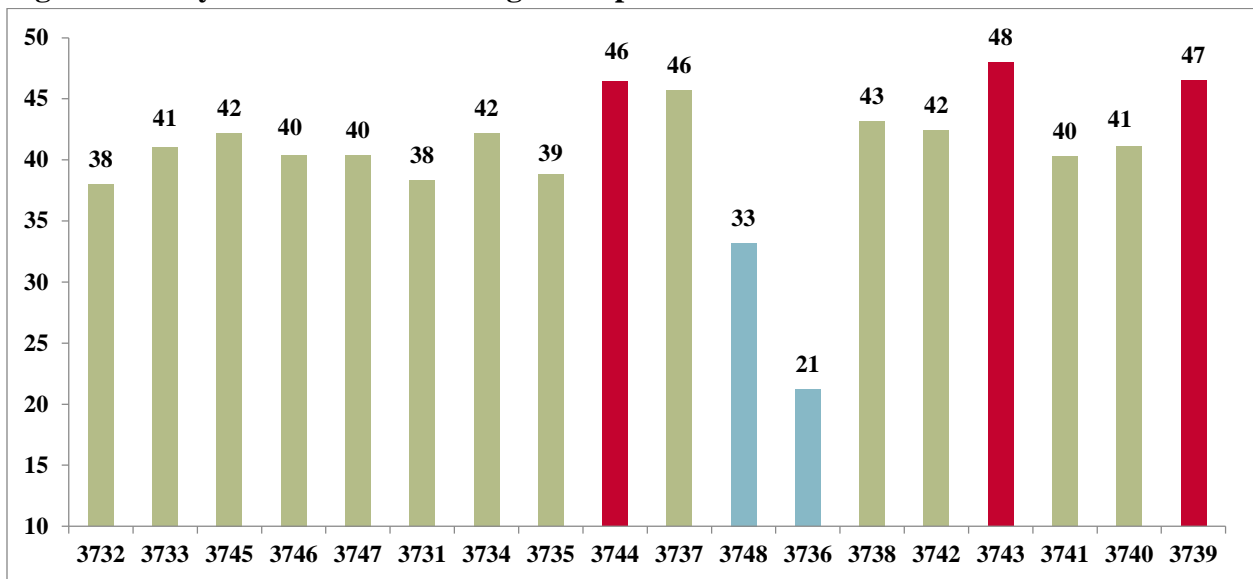


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

*Age Distribution*

As **Figure 26** reveals, there is some variance in the median age of the population in Newton. By far the youngest population is found in census tract 3736 where a large number of Boston College students are housed. Newton Lower Falls also has a younger population with a median age of 33 in tract 3739. The oldest population is found in Waban with a median age of 48 in tract 3743, followed by Oak Hill’s census tract 3739 where the median is 47.

**Figure 26: City of Newton Median Age of Population 2010**



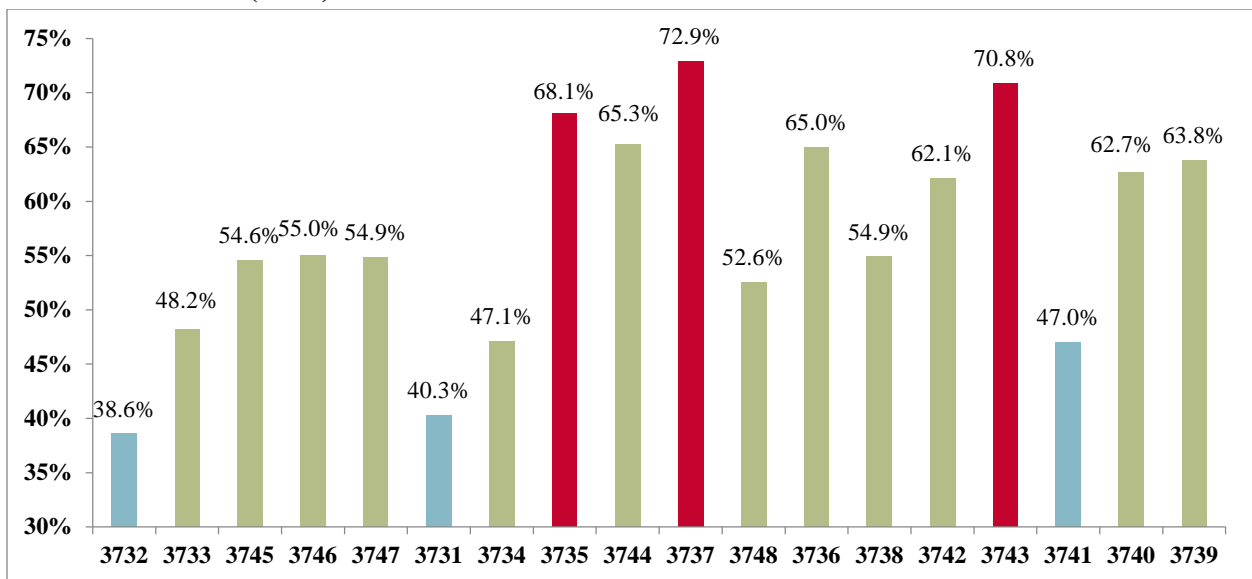
Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton



## Household Type

Newton's villages also vary by the types of households that live there, as **Figure 27** reveals. In census tracts 3737 and 3743, comprised mostly of the Waban and Newton Centre villages, more than 70 percent of the housing units are occupied by married couple families. In the Nonantum census tract 3732, less than 40 percent of the housing units have married couples living in them. Census tracts 3733, 3731, 3734, and 3741 include the neighborhoods of Newtonville, Newton Corner, and Newton Upper Falls with 40 to 50 percent of housing units occupied by married couple families. That proportion increases to between 50 and 70 percent in the remaining census tracts.

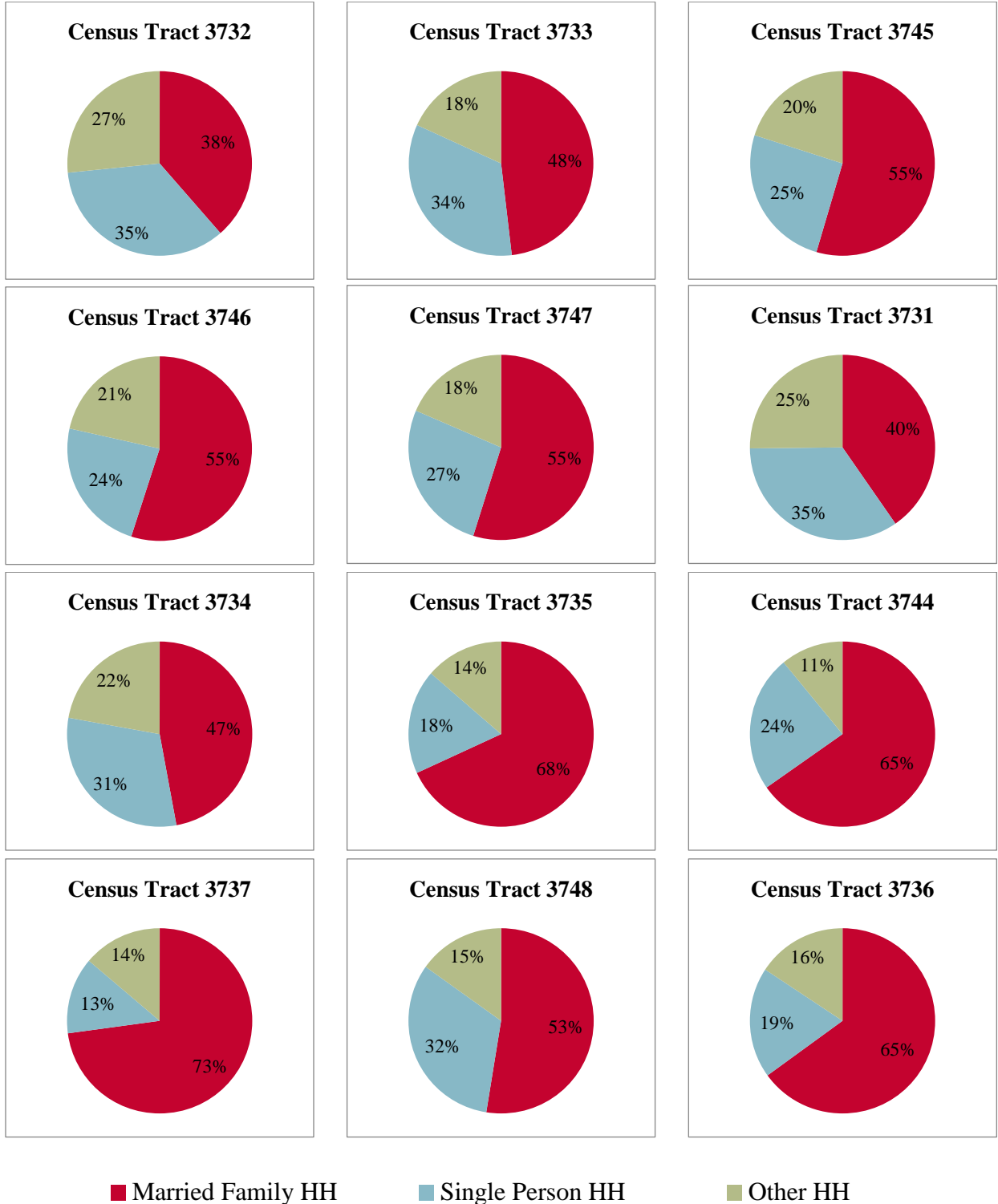
**Figure 27: City of Newton Married Couple Families as Percent of all Households by Census Tract (2010)**

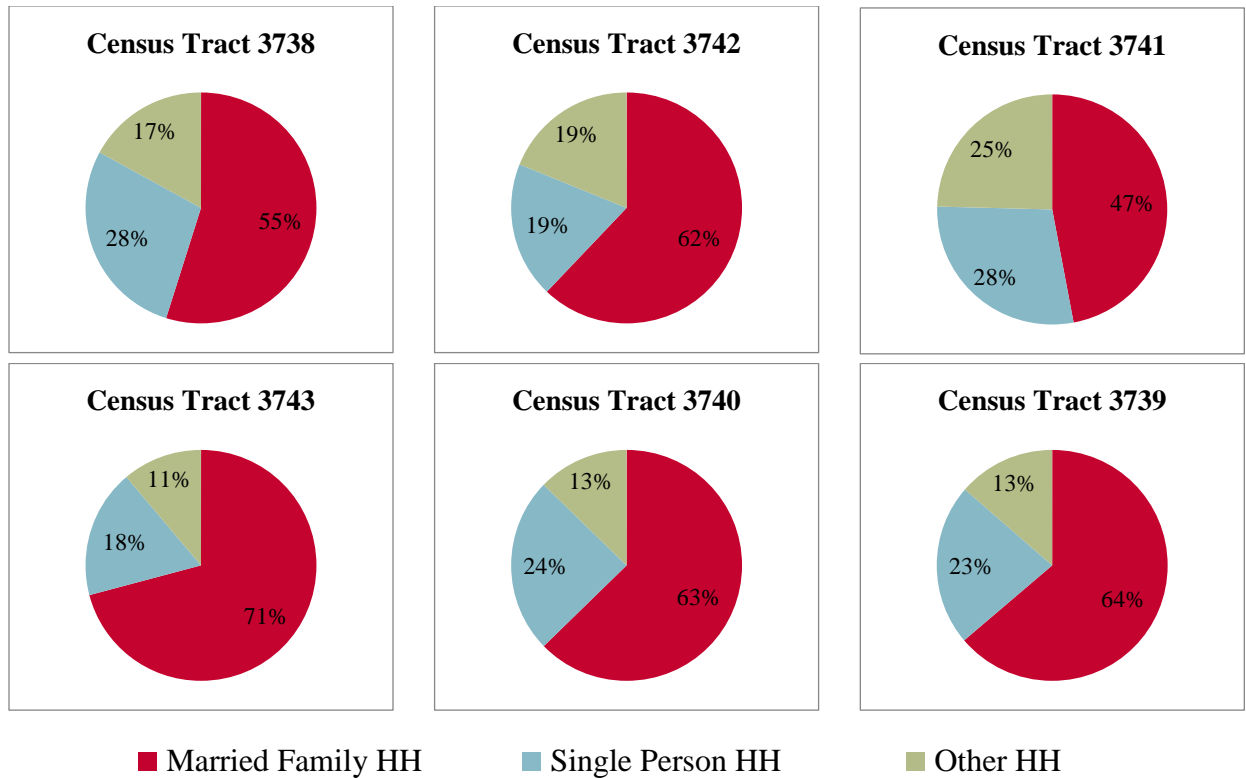


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

The pie charts in **Figure 28** provide data on the other types of households in each of the 18 census tracts. The percentage of single-person households is shown in orange, married couple families in blue, and “other households” in gray. These households include single-parent households with children, households with unrelated roommates, and households with unmarried couples. Note that with 73 percent of its households being comprised of married couple families, Newton Centre’s census tract 3737 has nearly twice the proportion of such households as census tract 3732 in Nonantum.

**Figure 28: City of Newton Household Type by Census Tract**



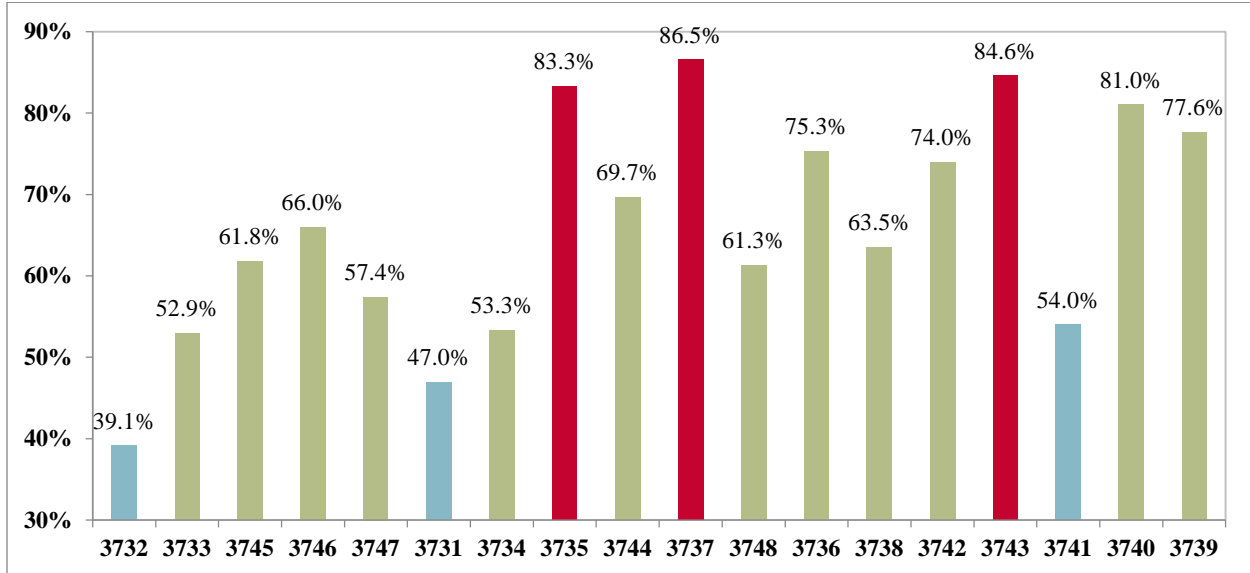


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

*Owner-Occupied Housing vs. Rental Housing*

As **Figure 29** reveals, there is also substantial variation in the type of housing tenure in each census tract. In census tract 3737 in Newton Centre, more than 86 percent of the housing stock is owner-occupied. By contrast, only about 39 percent of homes in Nonantum (tract 3732) are owner-occupied with the remaining occupied by renters. Except for Nonantum and Newton Corner (tract 3731), at least 50 percent of housing stock is owner-occupied throughout the Newton’s census tracts.

**Figure 29: Percent Owner-Occupied Housing Units 2010**

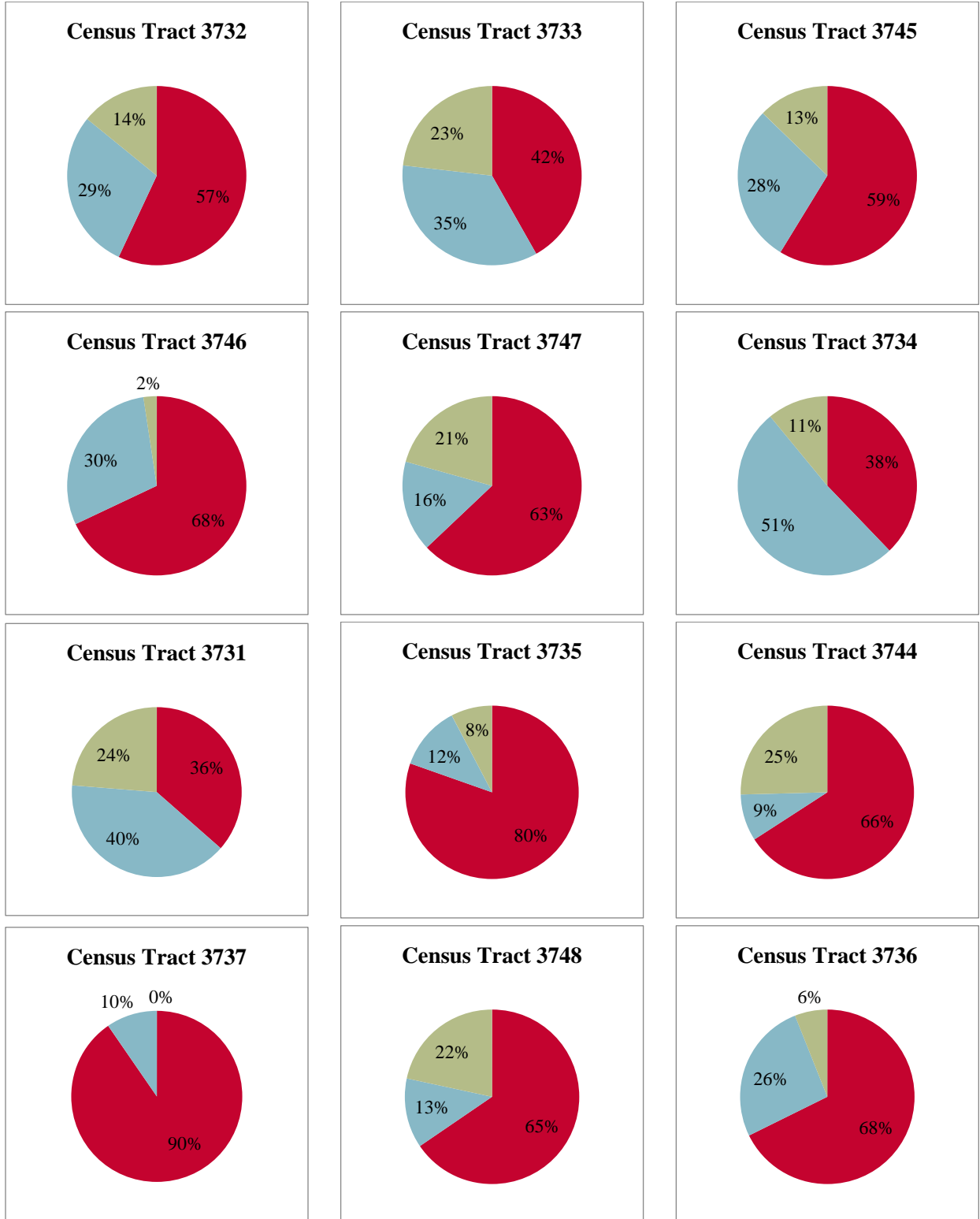


Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

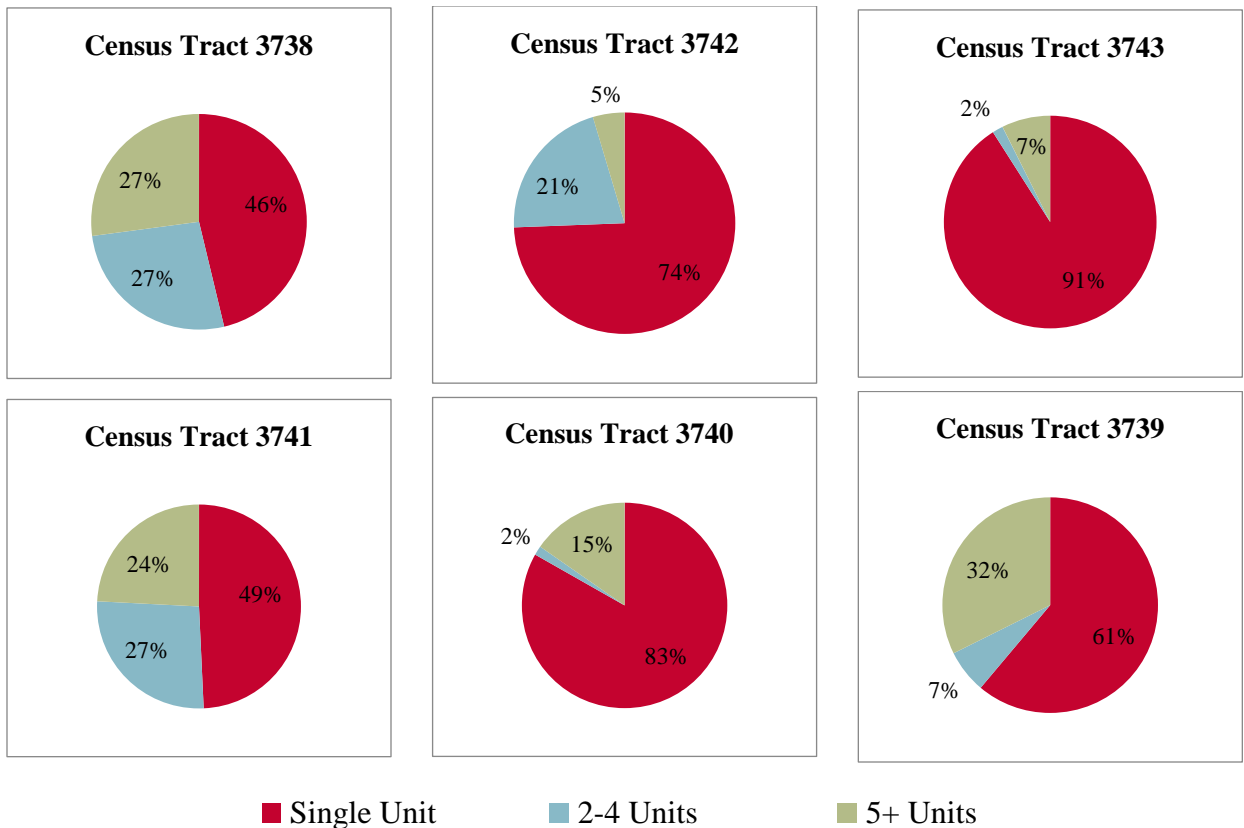
*Single-Family vs. Multi-Unit Housing*

**Figure 30** provides data on the type of housing units in each of Newton’s census tracts. Here, too, there is substantial variation. More than 90 percent of the housing stock in census tracts 3737 (Newton Centre) and 3743 (Waban) is comprised of single family housing. The housing stock with 2 to 4 units is greatest in the Newtonville census tract 3734 (51 percent) and in Newton Corner’s tract 3731 (40 percent). Only two percent of housing stock in census tracts 3740 and 3743 contain two to four units. Census tract 3739 in Oak Hill contains the greatest percent (32 percent) of larger apartment and condominium buildings with five or more units. Census tracts 3731 (Newton Corner), 3744 (Auburndale), 3738 (Newton Highlands), and 3741 (Newton Upper Falls) contain approximately 25 percent of their housing stock in apartments with five or more units. Less than 4 percent of housing stock in tracts 3835, 3742, and 3743 are in buildings with five or more units, and tract 3737 contains no housing stock at all with five or more units. Overall, census tracts 3738, 3731, and 3741 contain the bulk of Newton’s housing stock with two or more units.

**Figure 30: City of Newton Type of Housing Unit by Census Tract**



■ Single Unit      ■ 2-4 Units      ■ 5+ Units



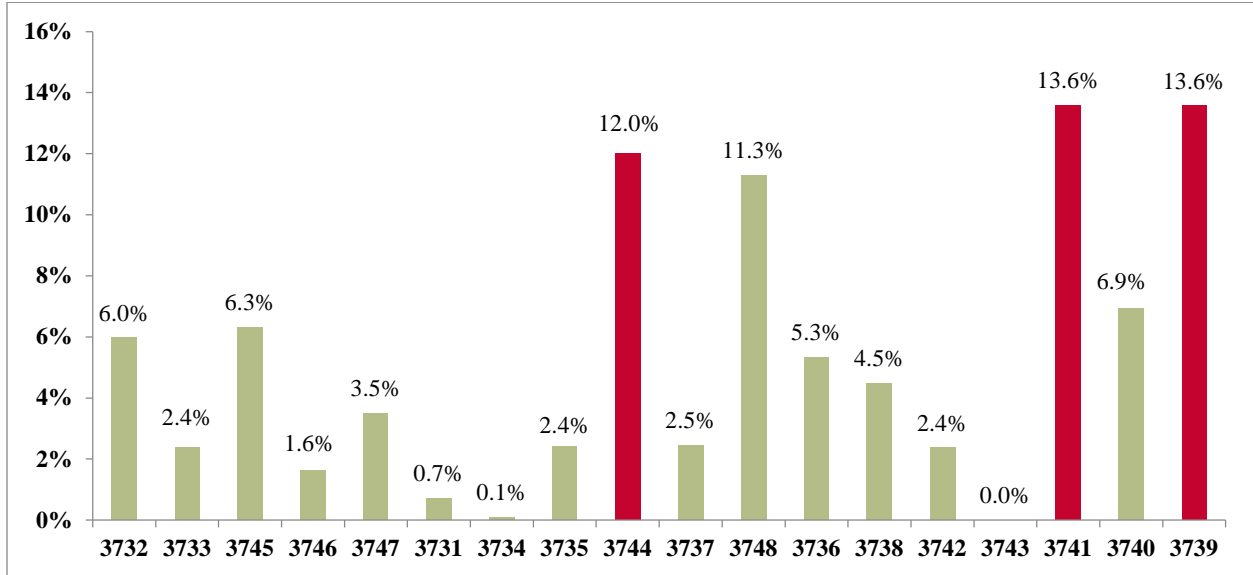
Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

### *New Housing Development*

Oak Hill and Newton Upper Falls (tracts 3741 and 3739) represent the hub of new housing development in Newton in recent years. In these tracts, nearly 14 percent of all of the housing stock has been constructed since 2000 (see **Figure 31**). The second most robust housing construction tracts are in Newton Lower Falls and Waban (tracts 3748 and 3744) containing 11.3 percent and 12 percent new construction, respectively.

The rest of the city of Newton has seen very little new construction since 2000. Southern Waban (3743) has seen no new housing development since that time. The neighborhoods of Newtonville and Newton Corner are not far behind. These census tracts include only 0.1 percent (3734) and 0.7 percent (3731) new housing development in recent years. These three areas bear little in common demographically. In the remaining census tracts, no more than seven percent of the existing housing stock was built after 2000.

**Figure 31: Percent of Housing Stock Built Since 2000 in Newton by Census Tract**

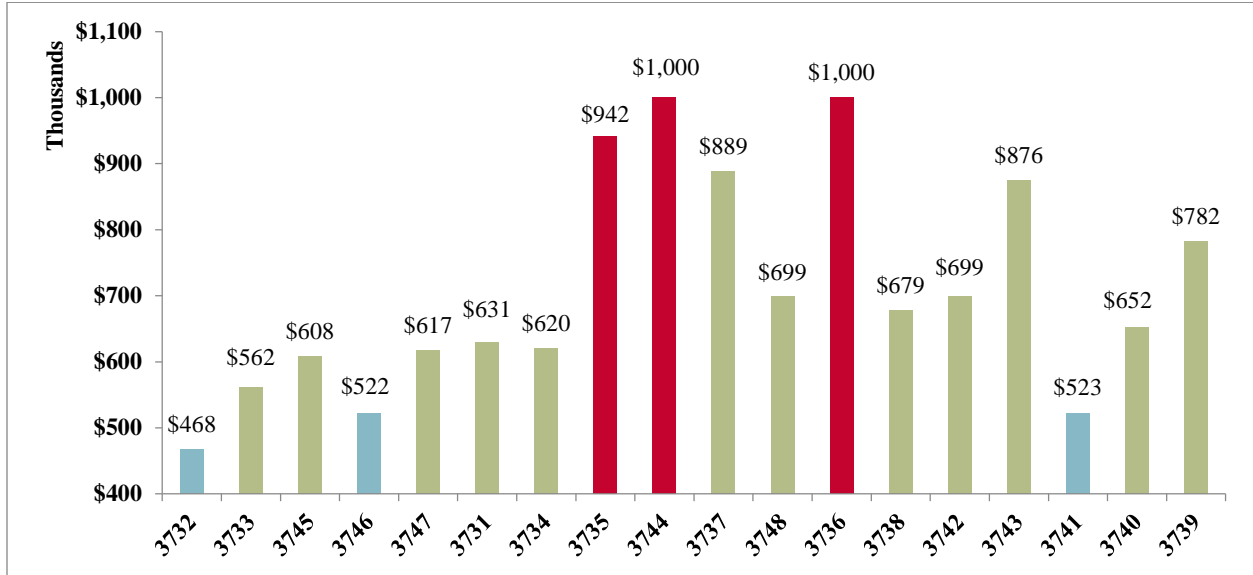


Source: U.S. Census Building Permit Survey

### Home Prices

Though home prices in Newton are on average much higher than the rest of the Greater Boston area, the most expensive homes in Newton tend to be found in the center portion of the city. This area includes the neighborhoods of Waban, Newton Center, Chestnut Hill, and parts of Auburndale and Newtonville in Census Tracts 3743, 3744, 3737, 3735, and 3736 (see **Figure 32**). Median home prices exceeded one million dollars in census tracts 3736 and 3744. Outside of those two census tracts, median prices range from \$467,800 in tract 3732 to \$941,900 in tract 3735.

**Figure 32: City of Newton Median Home Price 2010**



Source: USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton

*Summarizing the Census Tract Data*

**Table 2** and **Table 3** summarize all of these census tract data, providing a reasonable snapshot of the nature of the Newton’s population and housing stock across the town. At one end, tract 3741 (Newton Upper Falls) has the most racially and ethnically-diverse population. Tract 3736 where Boston College is located has the youngest residents, and tract 3732 (Nonantum) has the fewest units housing married couples, lowest median household income, and the greatest number of single-person households. This is also the census tract with the lowest median home value and the lowest percent of owner-occupied housing units.

At the other end is tract 3743 in Waban which houses the oldest residents and is the least racially and ethnically diverse. Census tract 3737 in Newton Centre is the wealthiest neighborhood with the most married-couple families and the lowest number of single-person households. This is also the tract with the largest percentage of owner-occupied housing stock and no housing stock comprised of 5 or more unit apartment or condominium buildings.

The most diverse census tract, 3741 (Newton Upper Falls), also contains the greatest amount of new housing stock. The most expensive housing is found in census tracts 3736 – the area around Boston College -- and 3744 (Auburndale).



**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Newton’s Census Tracts**

	Age	Diversity	Married Couple Families	Single Person Households	Income
373100					
373200			LEAST	MOST	LOWEST
373300					
373400					
373500					
373600	YOUNGEST				
373700			MOST	LEAST	HIGHEST
373800					
373900					
374000					
374100		MOST			
374200					
374300	OLDEST	LEAST			
374400					
374500					
374600					
374700					
374800					

*Source: Compiled from USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton*

**Table 3: Housing Characteristics of Newton’s Census Tracts**

	Median House Value	Owner Occupied Housing	Apartment Buildings	New Housing Stock
373100				
373200	LEAST \$	LEAST		
373300				
373400				
373500				
373600	MOST \$			
373700		MOST	NONE	
373800				
373900			MOST	
374000				
374100				MOST
374200				
374300				NONE
374400	MOST \$			
374500				
374600				
374700				
374800				

*Source: Compiled from USA.com Census Tract data for the City of Newton*

## Conclusions

This first report from the Dukakis Center on the City of Newton provides the baseline data for projecting population trends and housing demand for the next fifteen years. The key points can be summarized as:

- **Population.** Following a nearly 11 percent decline from 1960 to 1990, Newton has experienced a population rebound in the last two and a half decades. Still, while the population expanded by 2,561 residents between 1990 and 2010, the city has not yet matched its 1960 population peak of 92,384 residents and despite growing since 2000 by 1.6 percent, that rate of growth is roughly half of the state's growth rate (2.9 percent) and less than half that of Middlesex county (3.3 percent) between 2000 and 2010.
- **Households.** Between 1980 and 2010, household growth outpaced population growth by a factor of 4.4 (8.3 percent versus 1.9 percent respectively) as the average size of a Newton household declined from 2.77 persons to 2.50. Between 2000 and 2010, average household size remained essentially unchanged.
- **School-Aged Population (Age 5-19).** Between 1980 and 1990, the number of school-aged children in Newton declined by from 18,648 to 15,196 – a loss of nearly 3,500 or nearly 19 percent. However, since 1990, the school-age population has rebounded so that by 2010, the population was almost exactly equal to that in 1980. Today, 5-19 year-olds comprise nearly 22 percent of the city's population, up from 18.4 percent in 1990.
- **Older Age Cohorts.** Like other communities across the state, Newton's population is aging. In 1980, there were 11,881 residents who were 65 years or older, comprising 14.2 percent of the city's population. By 2010, there were nearly 1,100 more seniors and they now made up 15.2 percent of the population. As such, those aged 65+ made up 72 percent of the net increase in Newton's population between 1980 and 2010.
- **Families.** With the aging population and fewer young adults staying in Newton, families as a proportion of households in Newton has declined 15.5 percent between 1980 and 2010, dropping from 79.6 percent to 67.3 percent of all households. Between 1980 and 1990, the proportion of all Newton households comprised of families with children declined dropped from 29.6 percent of all Newton households to 24.3 percent. However, since 1990, the proportion is on the upswing reaching 27.1 percent by 2010.
- **Ethnic and Racial Diversity.** Like most cities across Massachusetts, Newton is becoming more diverse. As late as 1980, nearly 95 percent of the city's population was non-Hispanic white. By 2010, the non-Hispanic white population was less than 80 percent. The fastest growing group has been Asians, which grew

more than twice the rate of multiracial and Hispanic populations and nearly eight times the rate of African-Americans. By 2010, Asian-Americans comprised more than one in eight residents in Newton: 12.9 percent.

- **Income.** Newton has become increasingly affluent over the decades. In 2012 dollars, the median household income increased from \$96,252 in 1980 to \$148,877 in 2012. This rate of increase was more than 56 percent faster than the Greater Boston region as a whole. Nonetheless, nearly one out of eight Newton households (12.2%) live on less than \$25,000 per year ... including more than one out of six (17%) of non-family households in the city.
- **Housing Units.** Between 2000 and 2010, Newton saw the construction of 1,787 new housing units, but because many of these were built as the result of a tear-down of older units, the net addition to the city's housing stock during this decade was just 530 units.
- **Housing Stock.** The housing stock mix in Newton has remained dominated by single family units. From 1990 to 2012, single-family units held steady at 61 percent of the total housing stock, though more of those units were attached single-family units (e.g. rowhouses). The proportion of 2 to 4 unit structures declined from 22 percent to 25 percent. While the period 2002 to 2007 saw the addition of 669 units of apartment or condominium units in buildings with 5 or more units, there has been practically no new construction of this type of housing since then.
- **Home Values.** In Newton, homes have more than doubled in value since 1990. Median home values increased from \$293,400 in 1990 to \$438,400 in 2000. By 2012, the median value of a Newton home was more than \$687,000. Only about 6 percent of the homes in Newton had a value of less than \$300,000 in 2012, down from 10 percent in 2000. Since 2010, the median selling price of a single-family residence has skyrocketed from \$715,000 to \$855,000 in 2012. Today, the median selling price of a single-family home is 165 percent higher than that in Greater Boston as a whole.
- **Rents.** Housing rental rates in Newton also outpace rents in other parts of Greater Boston. With a median rent of \$1,632 during the 2008-2012 period, rents were 29 percent higher than those in Middlesex County and 55 percent than the median rent in Greater Boston.
- **Comparison of Census Tracts.** Newton's 18 census tracts vary greatly in their demographic profiles. These variations include median age (from 21.2 to 48), family households (38.6 to 72.9 percent), median household income (\$60,729 to \$204,156), and proportion of racial and ethnic minorities (10.1 to 27.8 percent).

All of these data will be useful in our attempt to project how Newton may change demographically over the next two decades and what this will mean as the town plans for new housing that will meet the needs not only of a growing population, but of a population that very likely will wish to make housing choices that are different from previous generations.

## ENDNOTES%

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<sup>1</sup> Data on the median selling prices of single-family homes for 2012 and 2013, generated by the Warren Group, are available in Barry Bluestone, et.al., *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2013* (Boston: The Boston Foundation, October 2013), Appendix Table A.

<sup>2</sup> For these analyses, we have used the most recent data available, from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006–2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, at the census tract level. These data are available online (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?refresh=t>).