

BOSTON'S CHILDREN:

Historical and Projected Future Trends

October 2025



City of Boston
Planning Department
RESEARCH DIVISION

RESEARCH DIVISION STAFF

ALVARO LIMA

Director of Research

CHRISTINA KIM

Deputy Director

PHILLIP GRANBERRY

Senior Demographer

MICHAEL ENDALE

Senior Economist - Data Scientist

FATIMA AQEEL

Senior Economist

KEVIN KANG

Senior Research Associate

EMILY KOREST

Research Associate

CECILIA TAKACS

Research Associate Coordinator - Data Analyst

SAM KLUGHERZ

Research Associate

NA YOUNG MOON

Research Assistant

TYLER YANDT

Research Assistant

GRACE JULIEN

Research Associate - Data Analyst

SAM POLLAK

Intern

The following presentation is the work of the **City of Boston Planning Department Research Division**.

Use of our work **requires** the inclusion of the following citation: “City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis.”

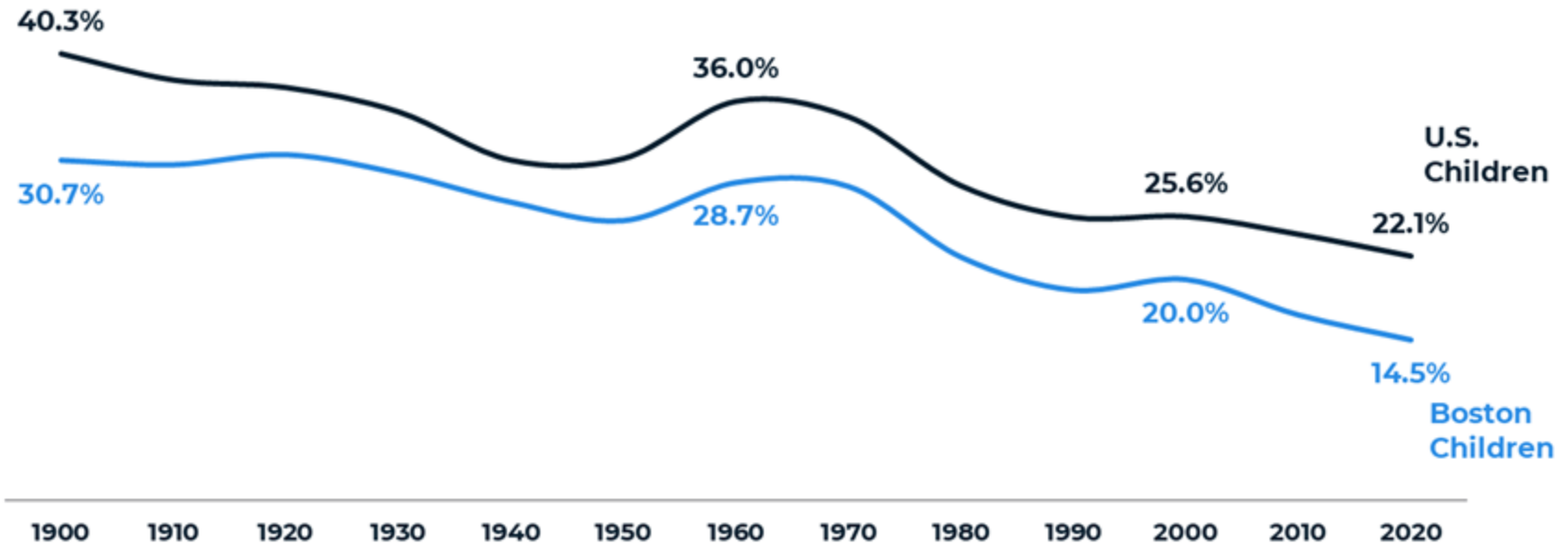
The child population is declining in Boston and across the country



City of Boston
Planning Department

Both the U.S. and Boston have faced demographic and economic forces that led to a long term decline in the share of children in the population

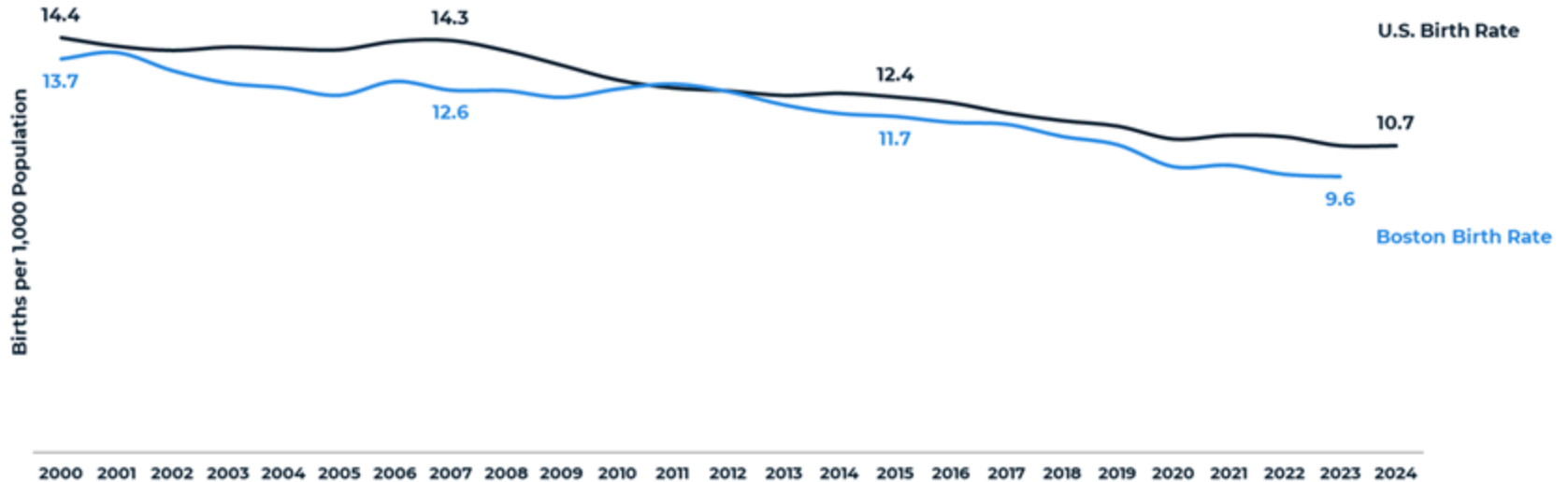
Boston and US child share of population, 1900 to 2020



Sources: 1900 to 2020 Decennial Censuses and 2020 City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, Research Division Analysis

Births rates have been declining in Boston and across the country over the last quarter century

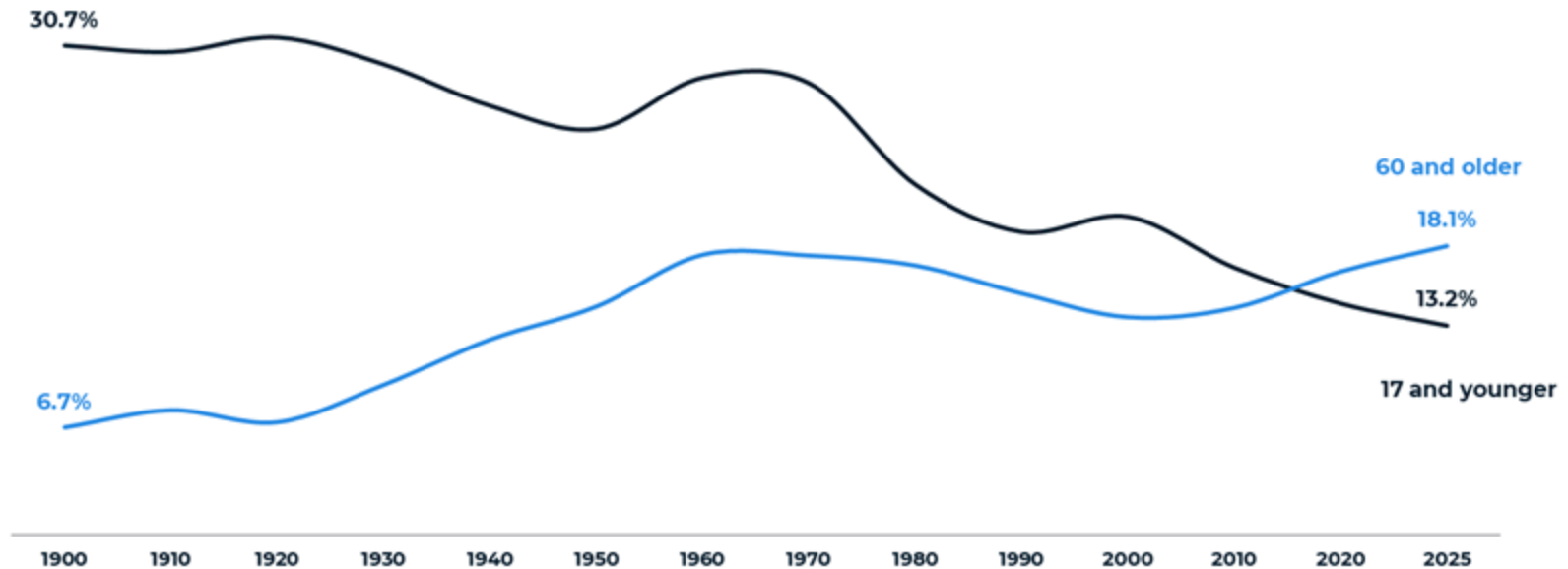
United States & Boston birth rates, 2000 to 2024



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Boston Public Health Commission, Census Bureau and City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, Research Division Analysis

The child share of Boston's population has fallen from 30.7% in 1900 to 13.2% in 2025, while the older population has risen

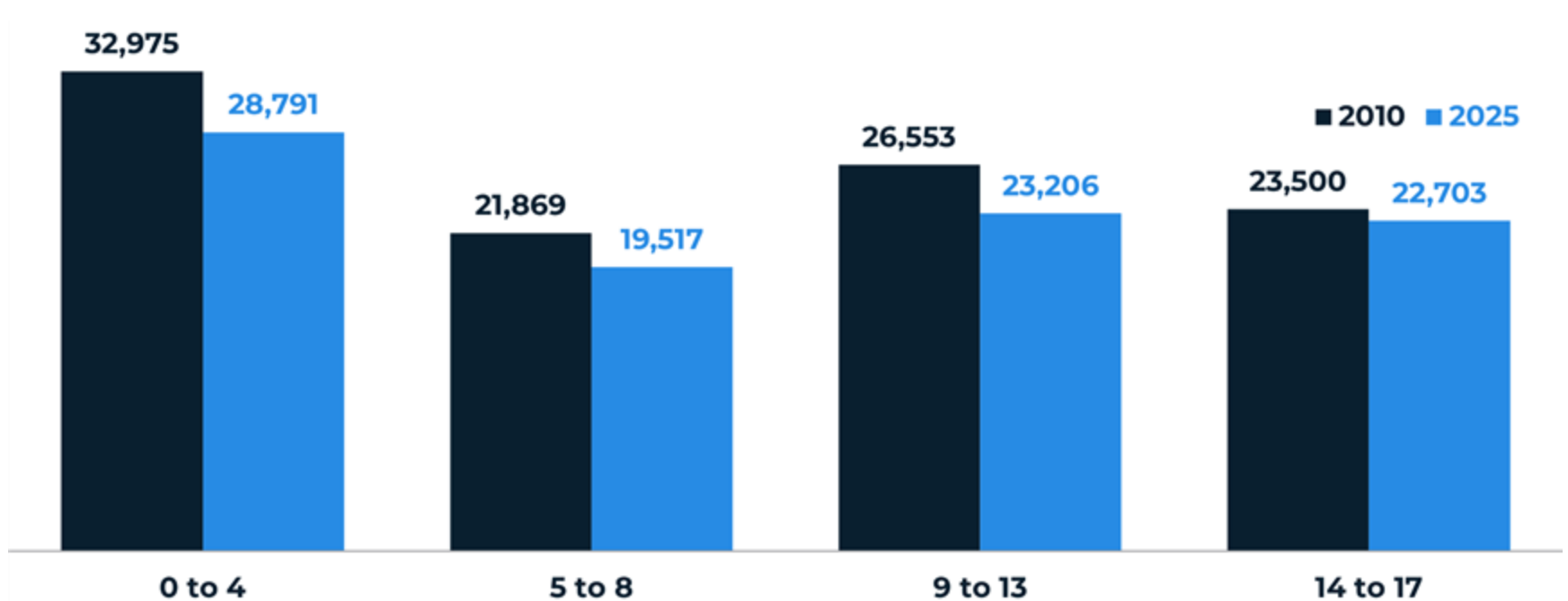
Boston child and older share of population, 1900 to 2025



Sources: 1900 to 2010 Decennial Censuses and 2020 to 2025 City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, Research Division Analysis

With 94,217 children in 2025, Boston has 10% fewer children than in 2010

Boston children by age groups, 2010 & 2025

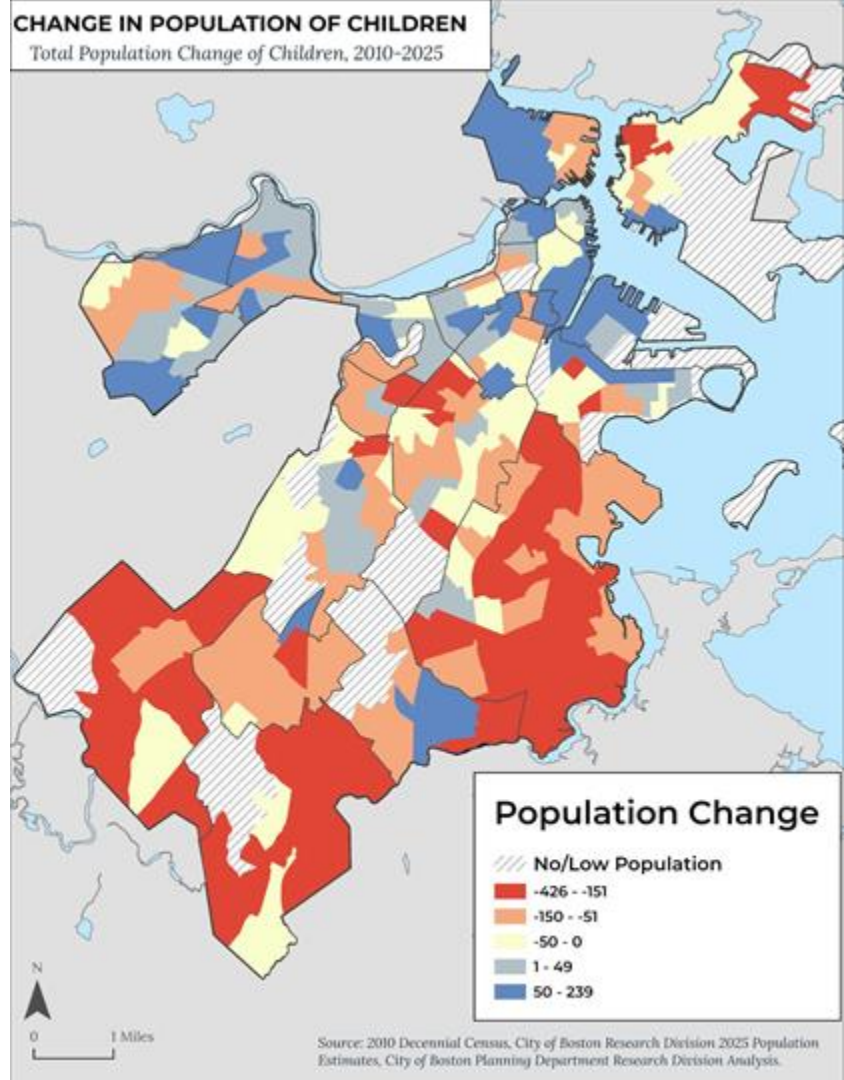


Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

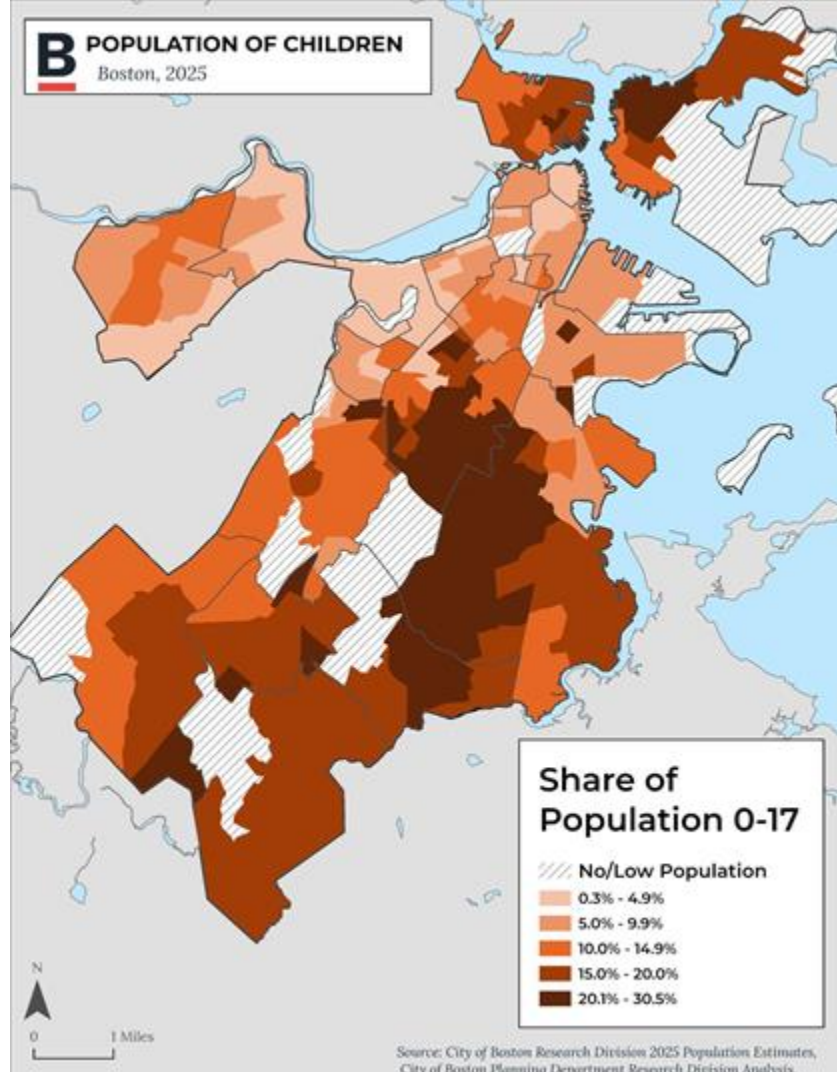
From 2010 to 2025,

Northern areas of the city especially in Allston, Brighton, Charlestown, Downtown, and South Boston Waterfront saw growing child populations

Southern areas of the city especially in Dorchester and Hyde Park saw declining child populations



Despite recent declines, Boston's children continue to be concentrated in **East Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan**



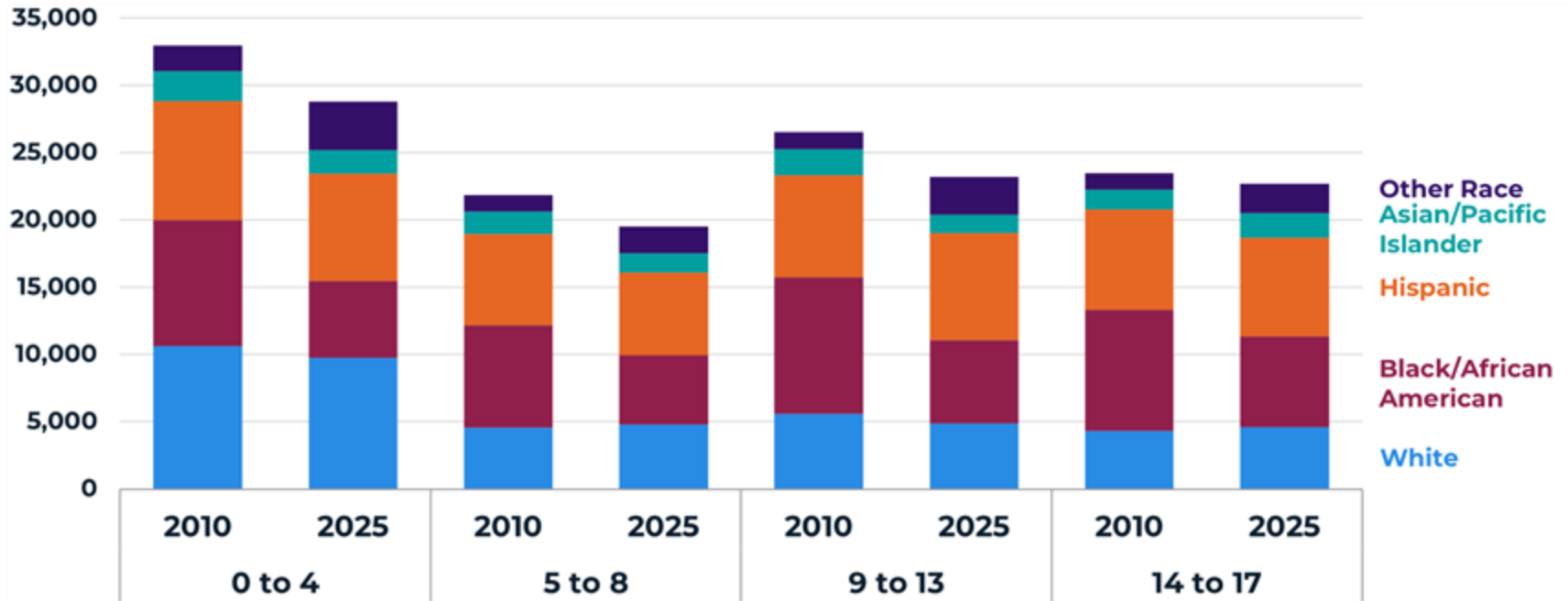
Boston's children reflect the city's growing diversity



City of Boston
Planning Department

75% of the children in Boston in 2025 are a race or ethnicity other than Non-Hispanic White, compared to 76% in 2010

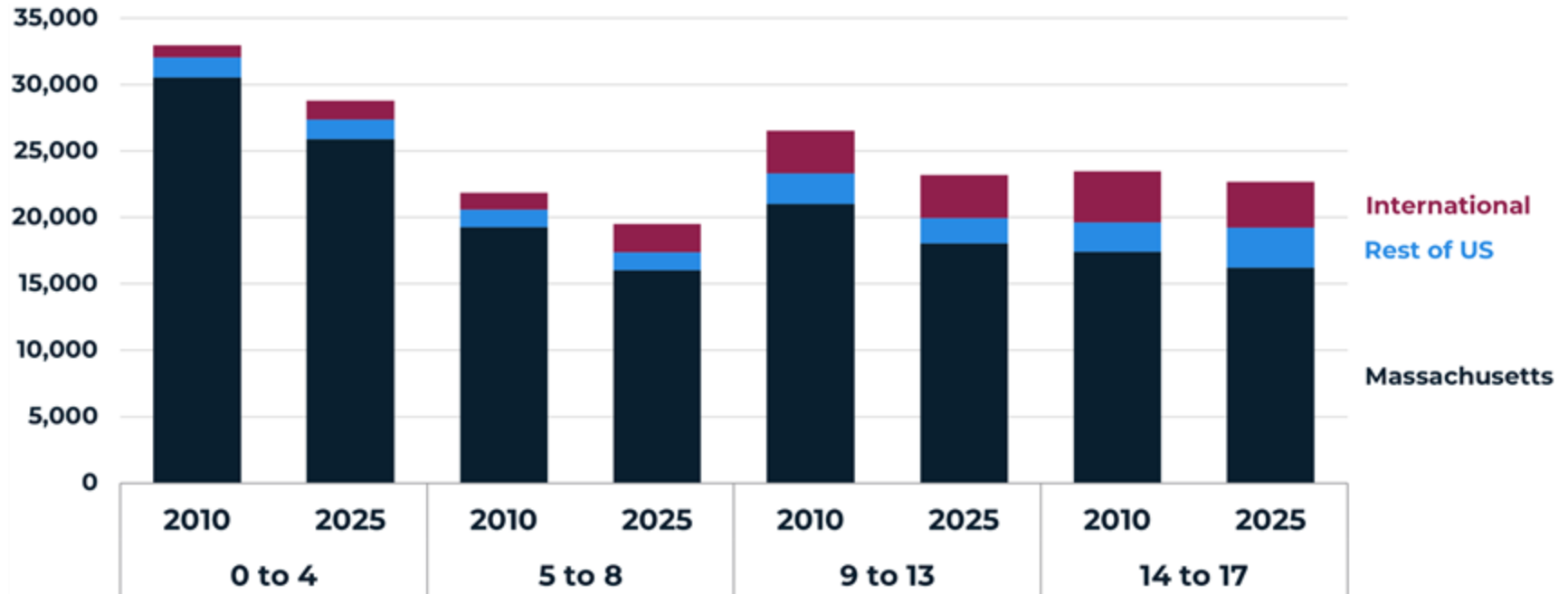
Boston children by race and ethnicity, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

Just over 10,000 (11%) Boston children in 2025 were born outside the U.S., up from 9% in 2010.

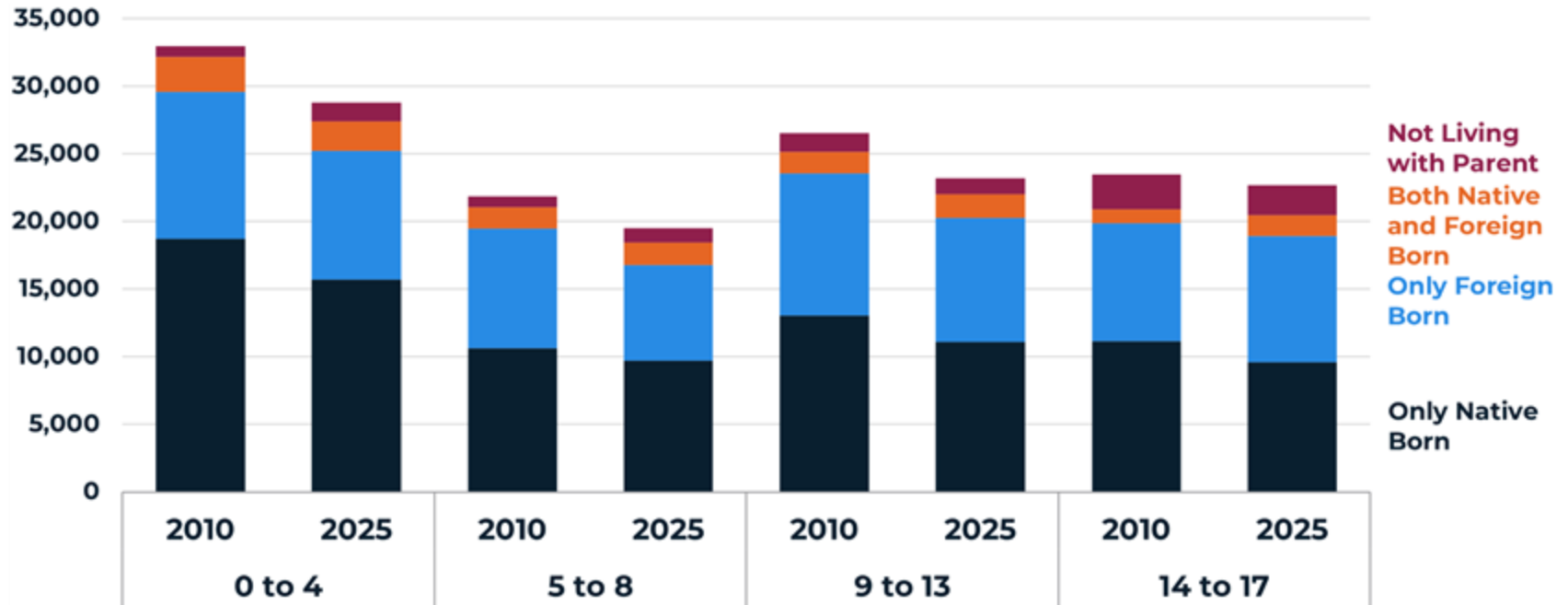
Boston children by place of birth, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

48% of Boston children living with their parents have at least one foreign-born parent in 2025, up from 46% in 2010

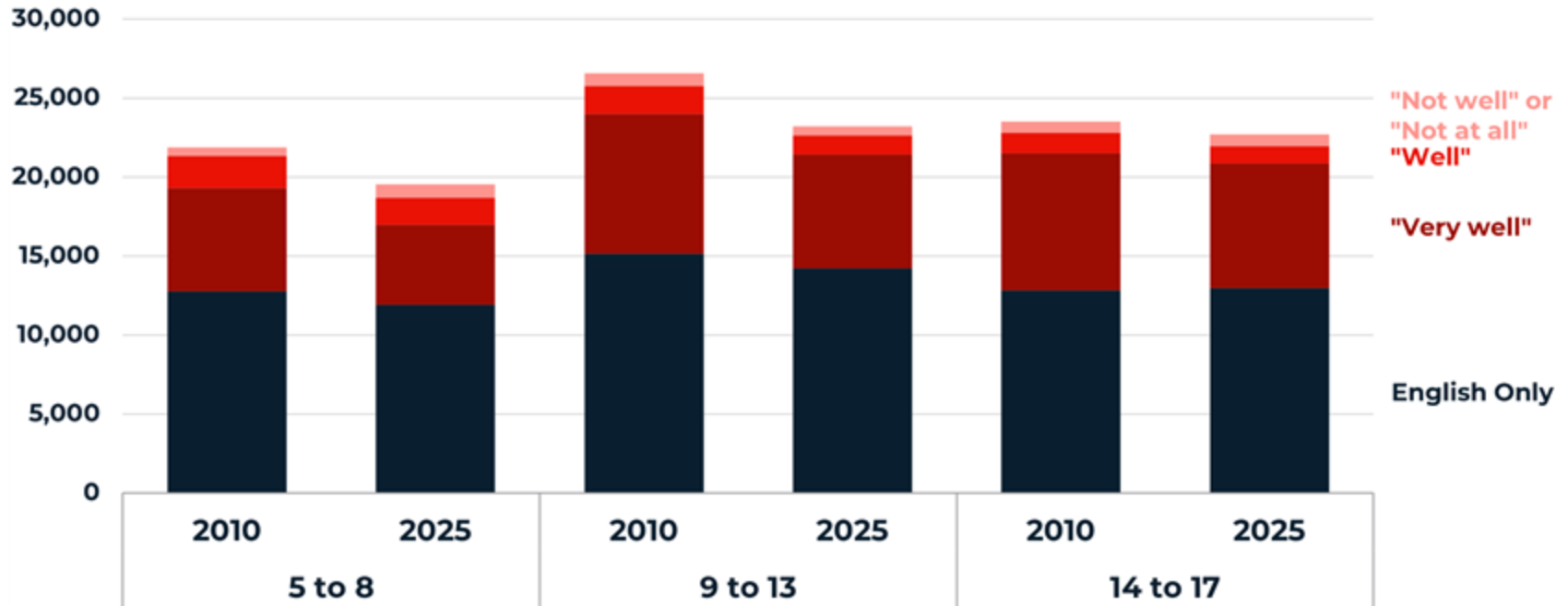
Boston children by nativity of parents, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

40% of Boston children aged 5 to 17 speak a language other than English at home, but most also speak English very well

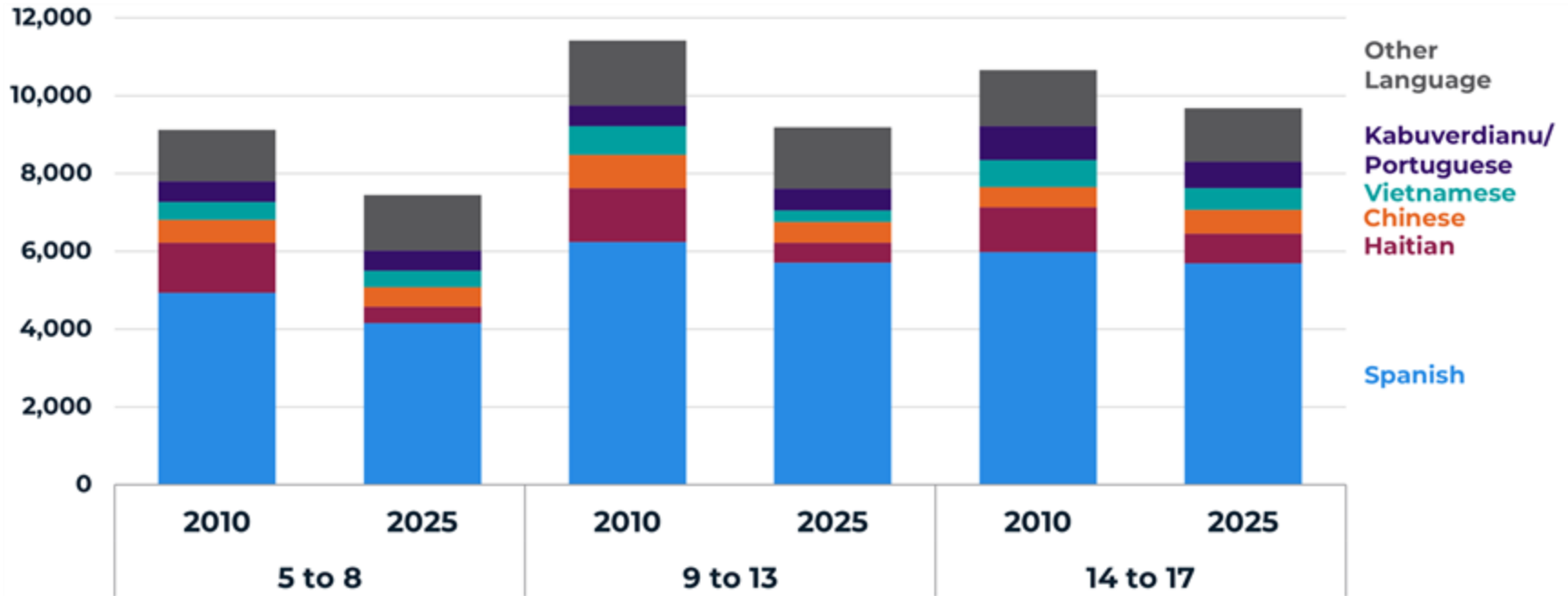
Boston children aged 5 to 17 by English language proficiency, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

~26,000 Boston children aged 5 to 17 speak a language other than English at home, mostly Spanish, Haitian, Chinese, Vietnamese, or Kabuverdianu

Boston children aged 5 to 17 by language spoken at home other than English, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

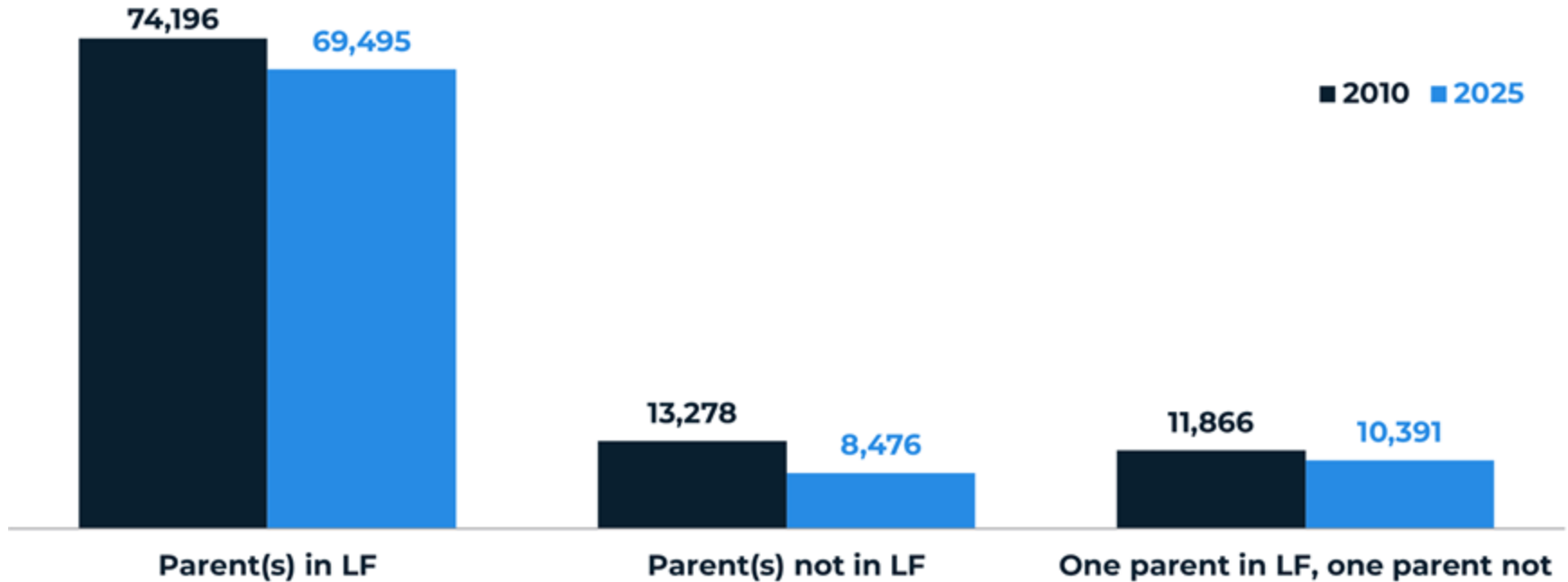
Demographic trends affect child care and education



City of Boston
Planning Department

In 2025, only ~21% of children had at least one parent not in the labor force, down from ~25% in 2010

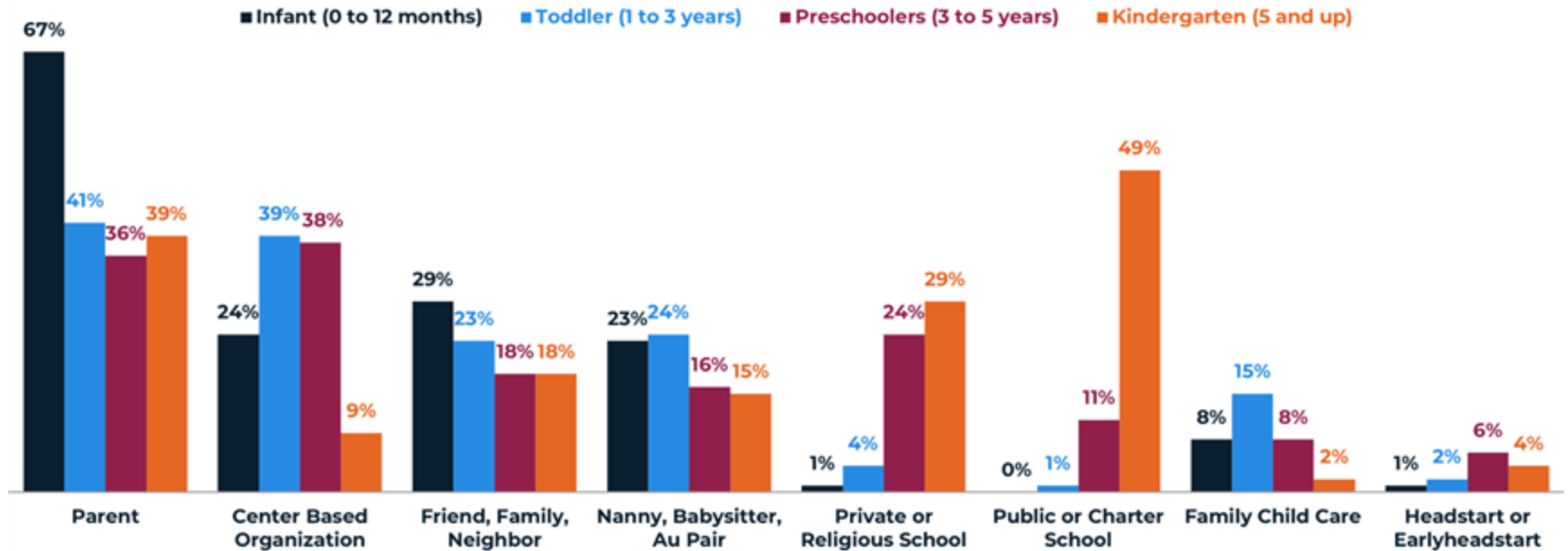
Boston children by parent employment status, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

Parents report using multiple childcare arrangements with parental care dominating for infants while center-based care is more common for toddlers and preschoolers

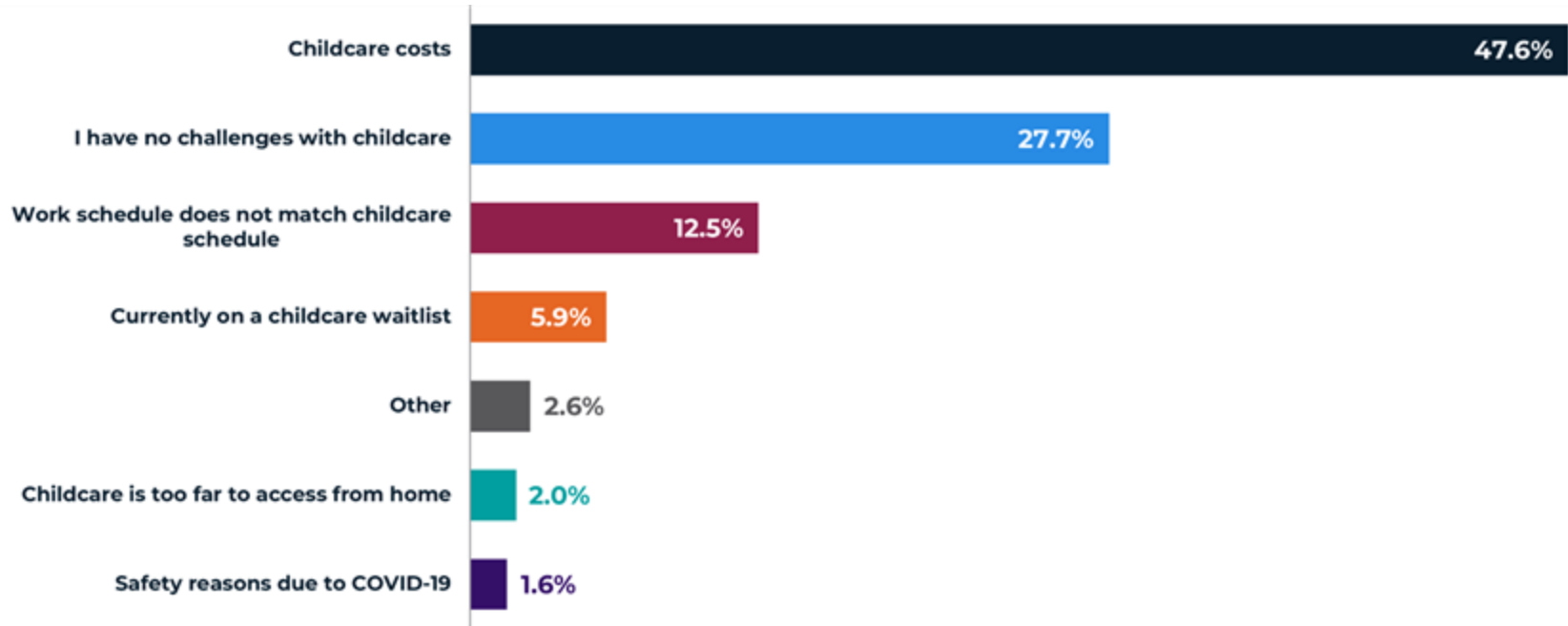
Current childcare arrangement by age group, 2023



Sources: 2023 Childcare Survey: Understanding the State of Early Childhood in Boston, Mayor's Office of Early Childhood

48% of surveyed parents cite childcare costs as a problem

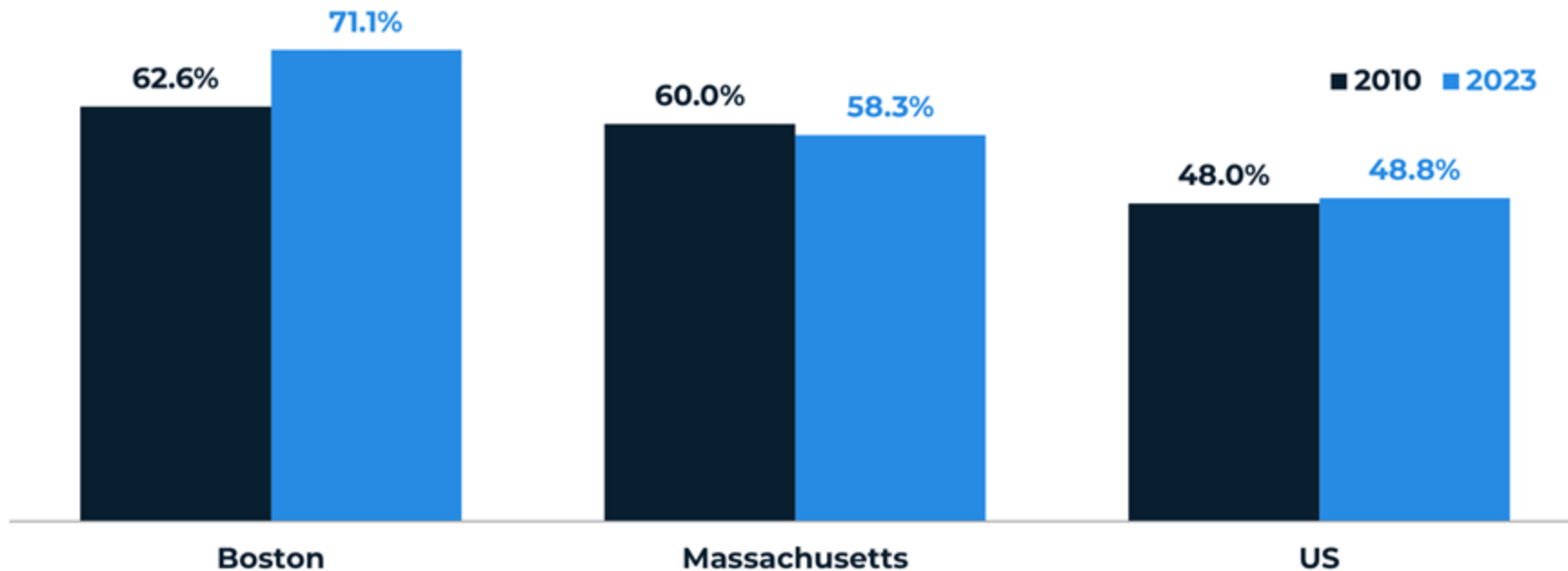
Main reason current childcare arrangement does not meet caregiver needs, 2023



Sources: 2023 Childcare Survey: Understanding the State of Early Childhood in Boston, Mayor's Office of Early Childhood

Boston Pre-K, a free public pre-kindergarten program for children ages 3 and 4, enables more Boston preschoolers to attend school

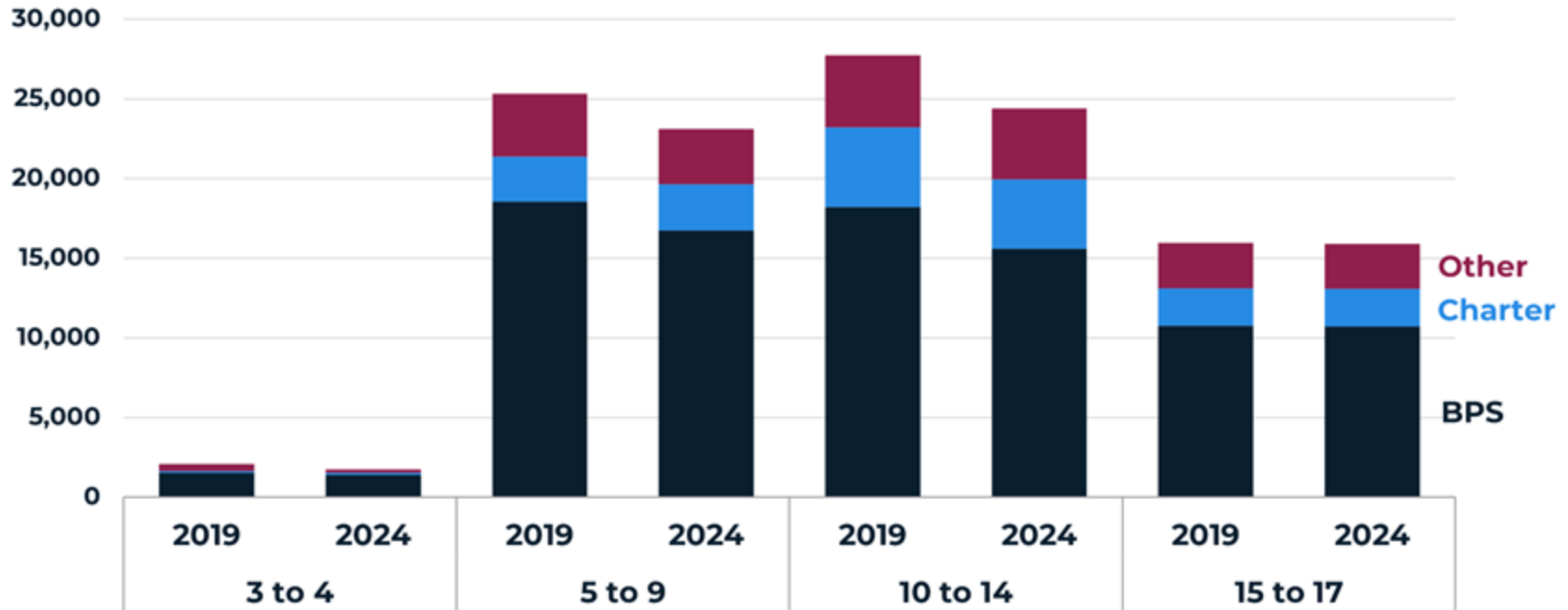
School enrollment of 3 and 4 year olds in Boston, MA, and the US, 2010 & 2023



Sources: 2008-2012 and 2023 American Community Survey, Research Division Analysis

Approximately 68% of school-enrolled children in Boston attend BPS and 15% attend charter schools

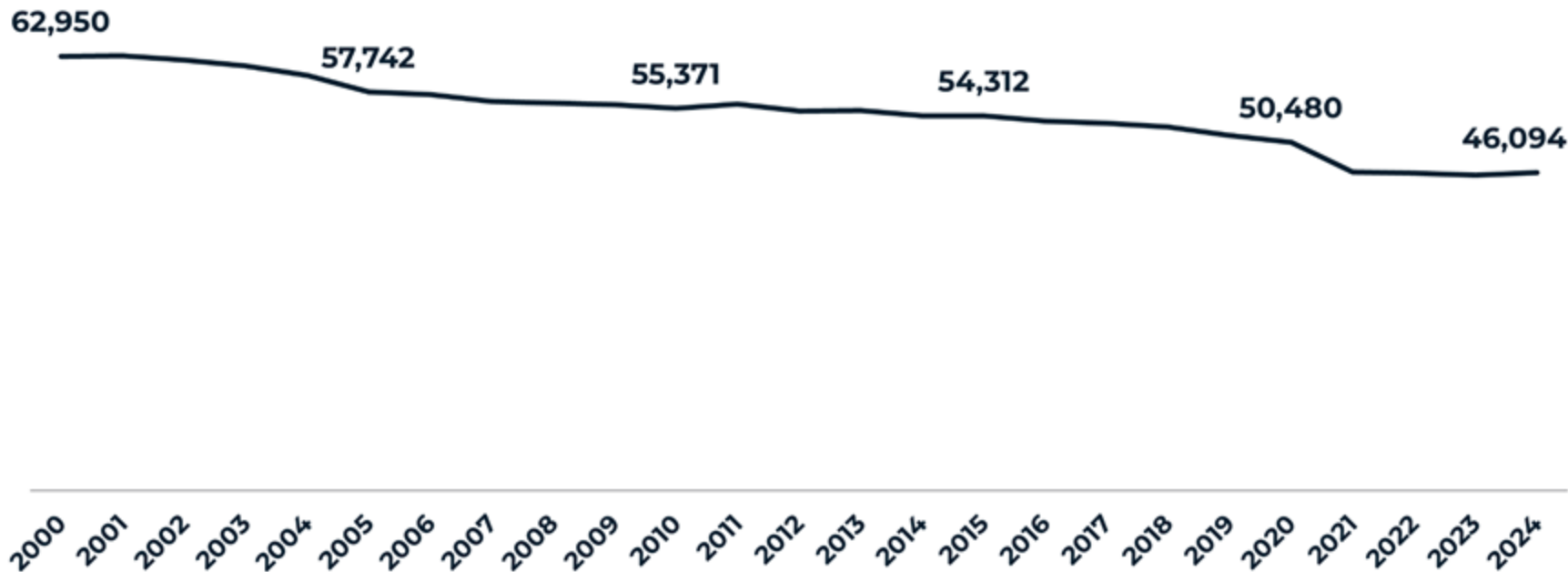
Total school enrollment in Boston by age and type of school, 2019 & 2024



Source: Boston Public Schools, Research Division Analysis

As Boston's child population declined since 2000, so has BPS enrollment

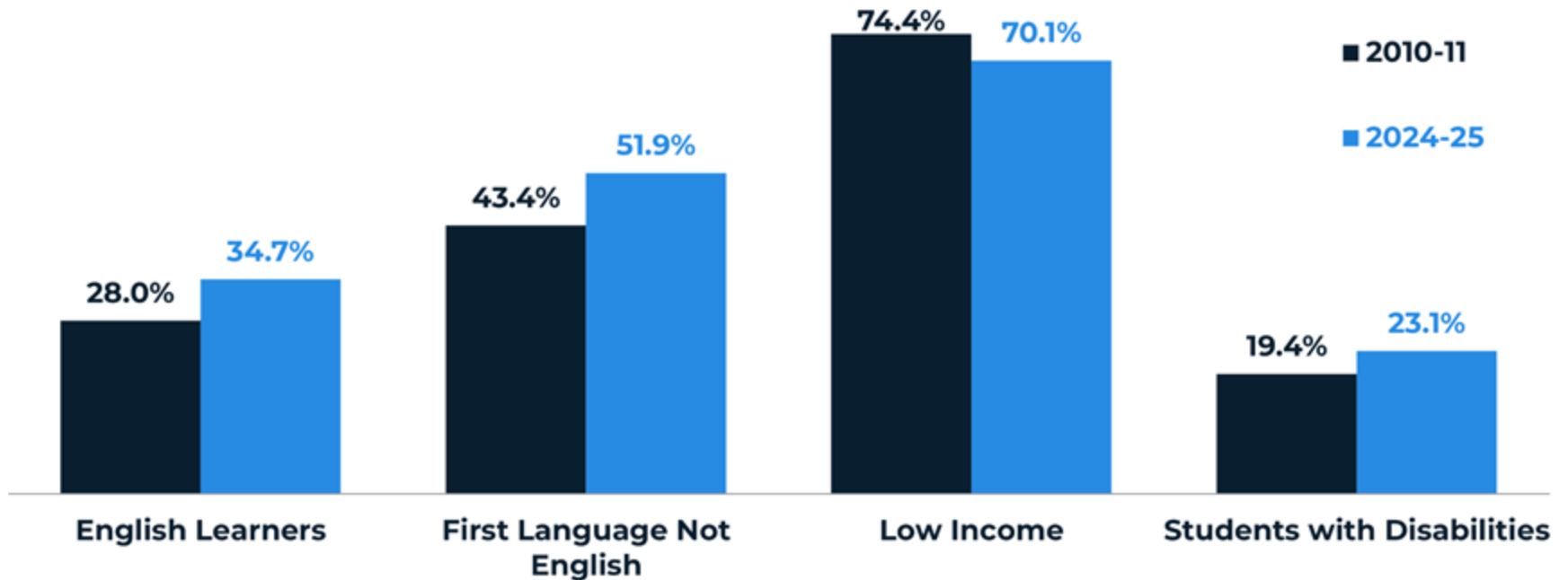
BPS Enrollment, 2000-2024



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

BPS serves a growing share of students who are English learners or have disabilities

Select BPS populations by share of district, 2010-11 & 2024-25



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Planning Department Research Division Analysis

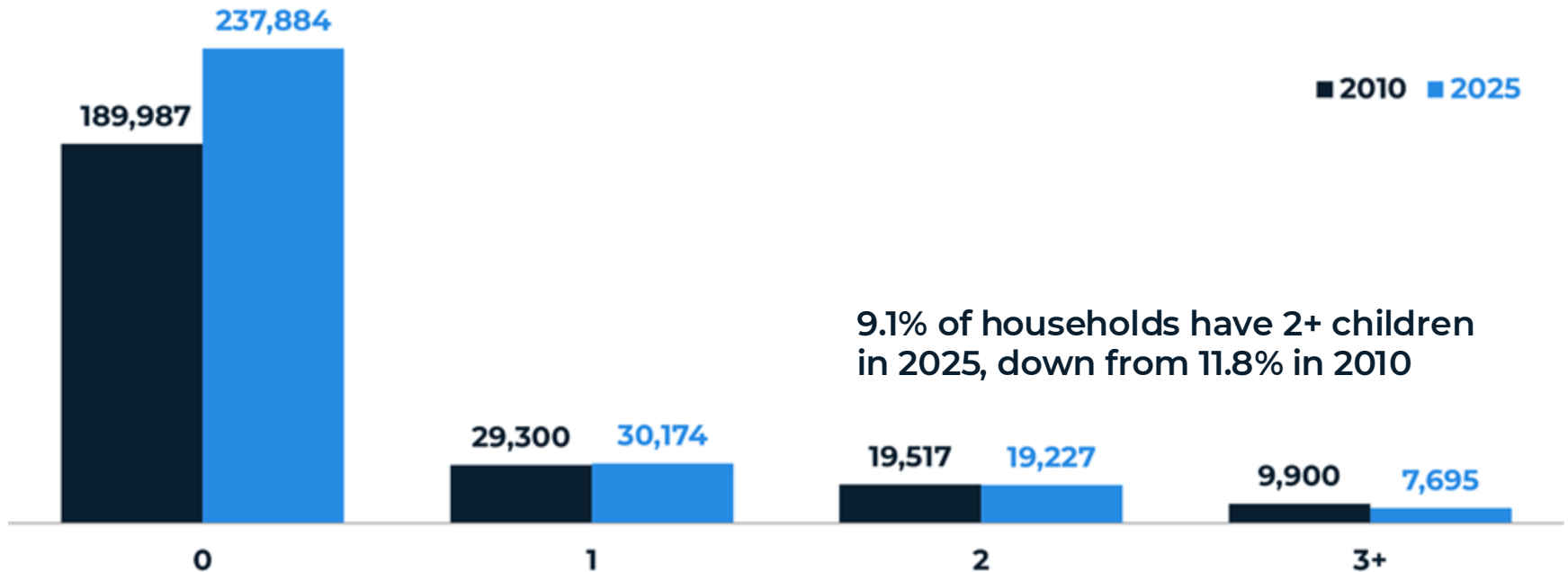
Boston households with children face challenges



City of Boston
Planning Department

In 2025 ~20% of Boston households have a child under 18, down from ~21% in 2010

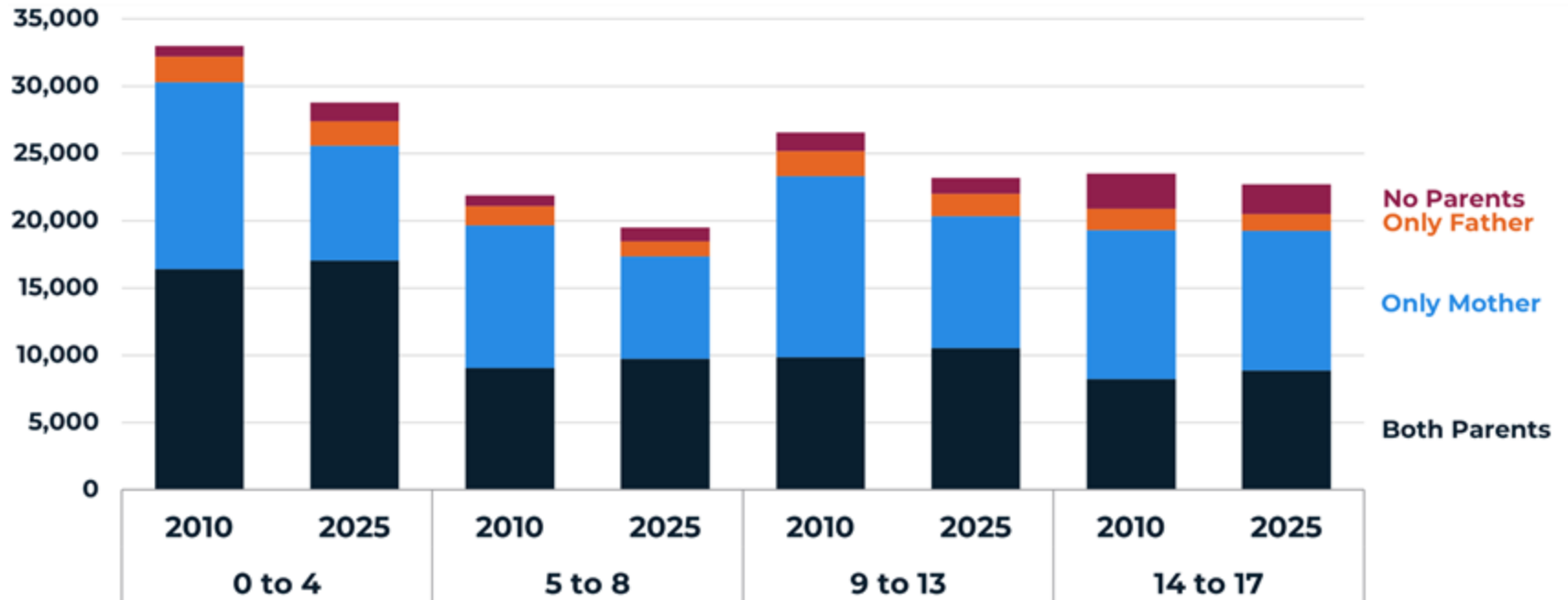
Boston households by number of related children, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

In 2025 ~49% of Boston children live with both parents, up from ~42% in 2010

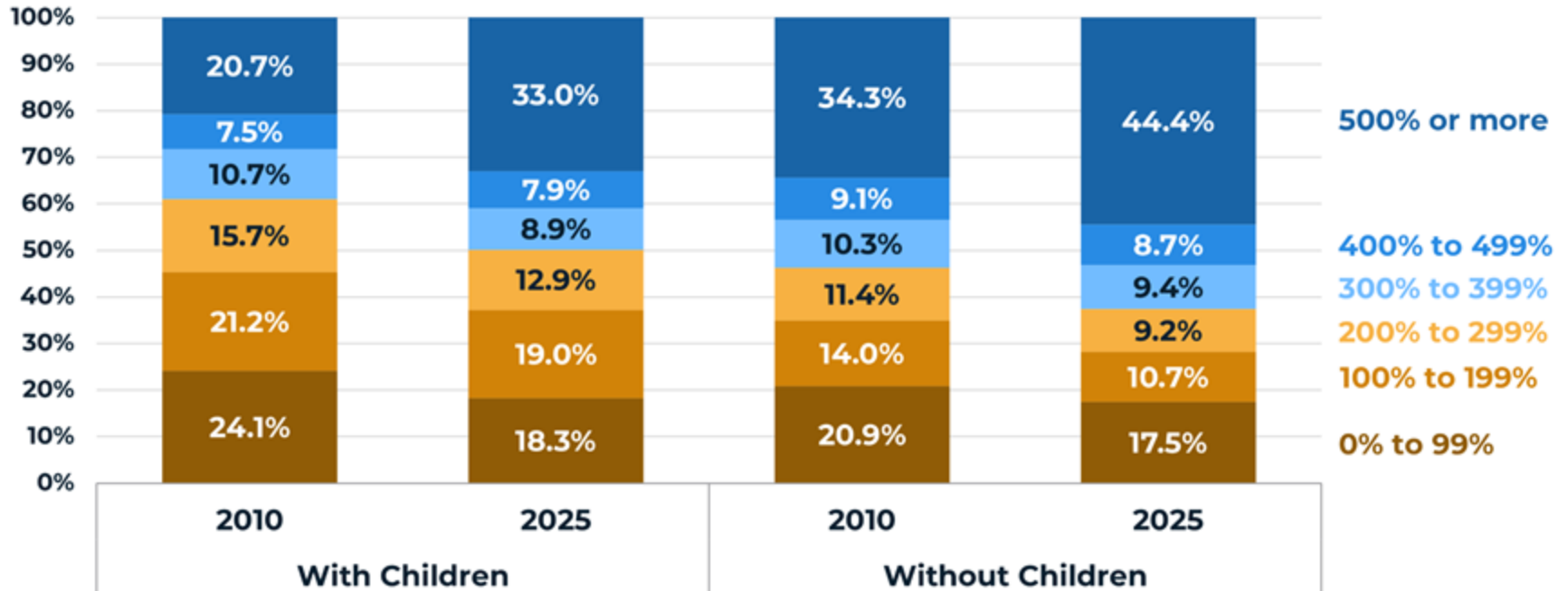
Boston children by family structure, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

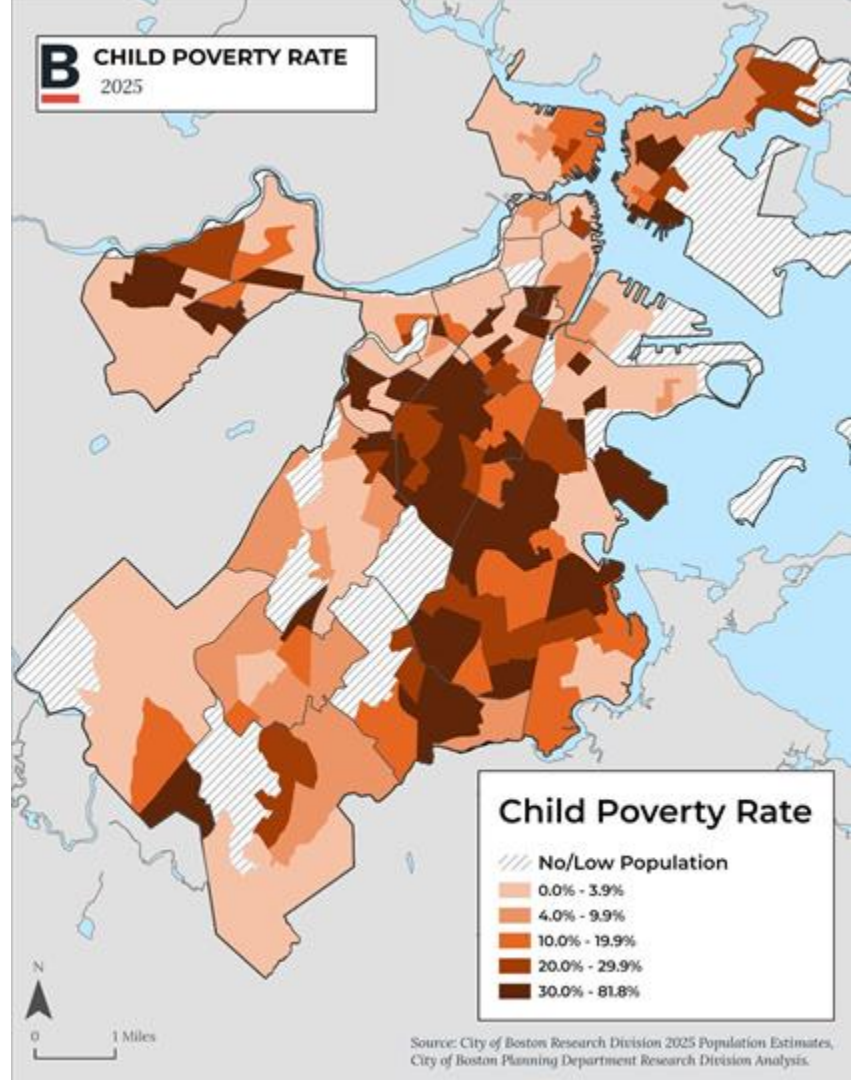
About half of families with children do not have a family sustaining income (>300% of poverty line), down from ~60% in 2010

Boston households with and without children by poverty status, 2010 & 2025



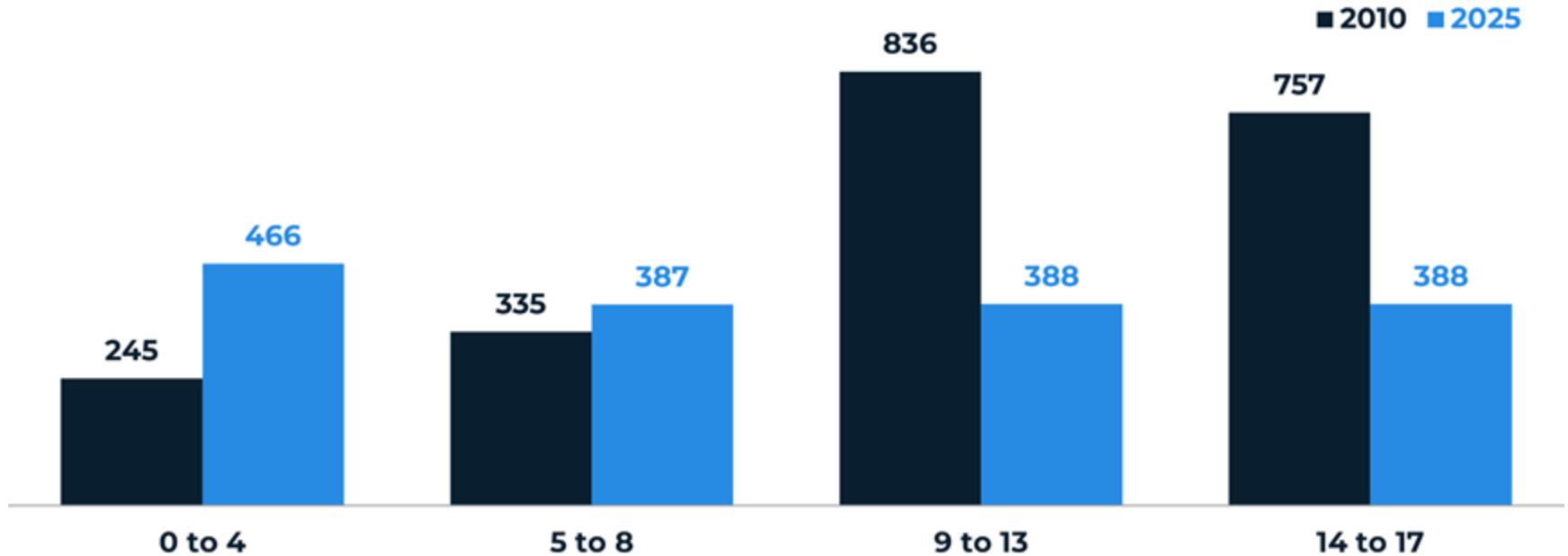
Note: 300% of poverty threshold is a proxy for the family income needed to live self sufficiently in Boston according to Research Division research.
 Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

Overall, 21.7% of Boston's children live in poverty, but some areas, especially in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan, have significantly higher rates of child poverty



Thanks to programs like MassHealth, only 1.7% of Boston's children do not have health insurance in 2025, down from 2.1% in 2010

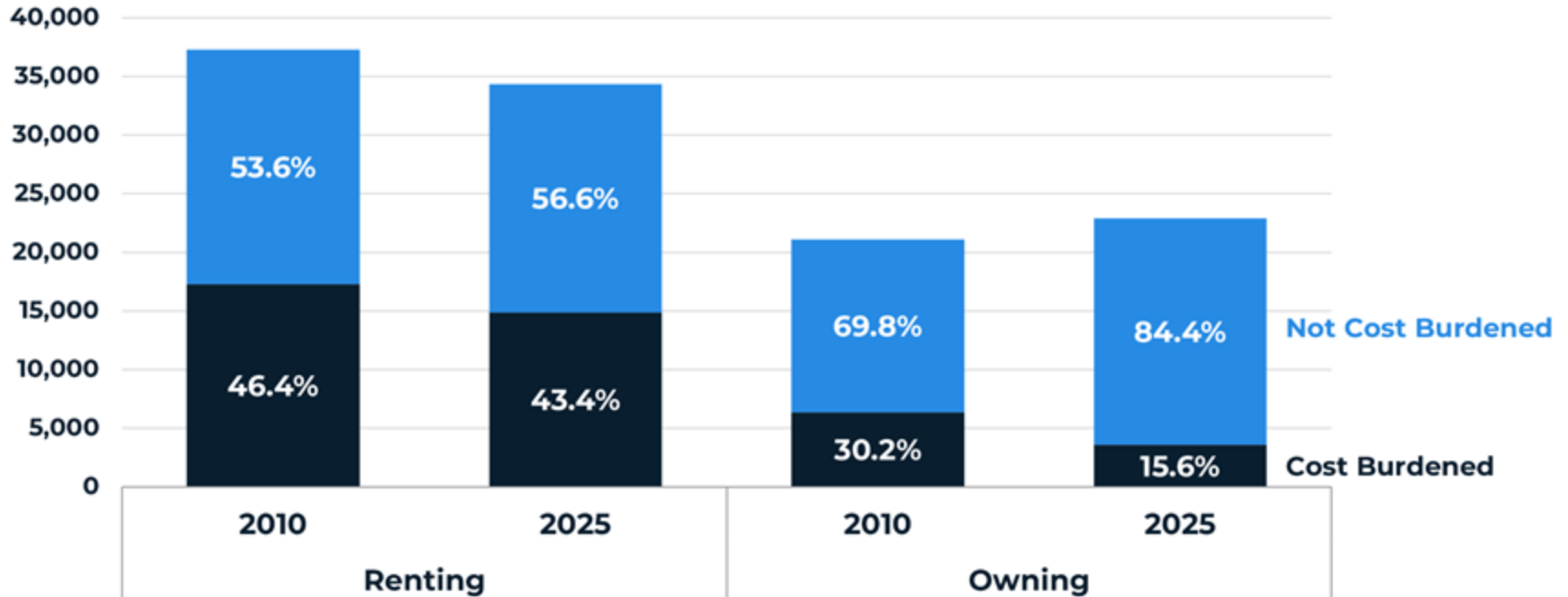
Boston children with no health insurance coverage, 2010 & 2025



Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

Of the 58,010 Boston households with children in 2025, ~32% pay more than 35% of their household income on housing

Boston households with children by tenure, 2010 & 2025

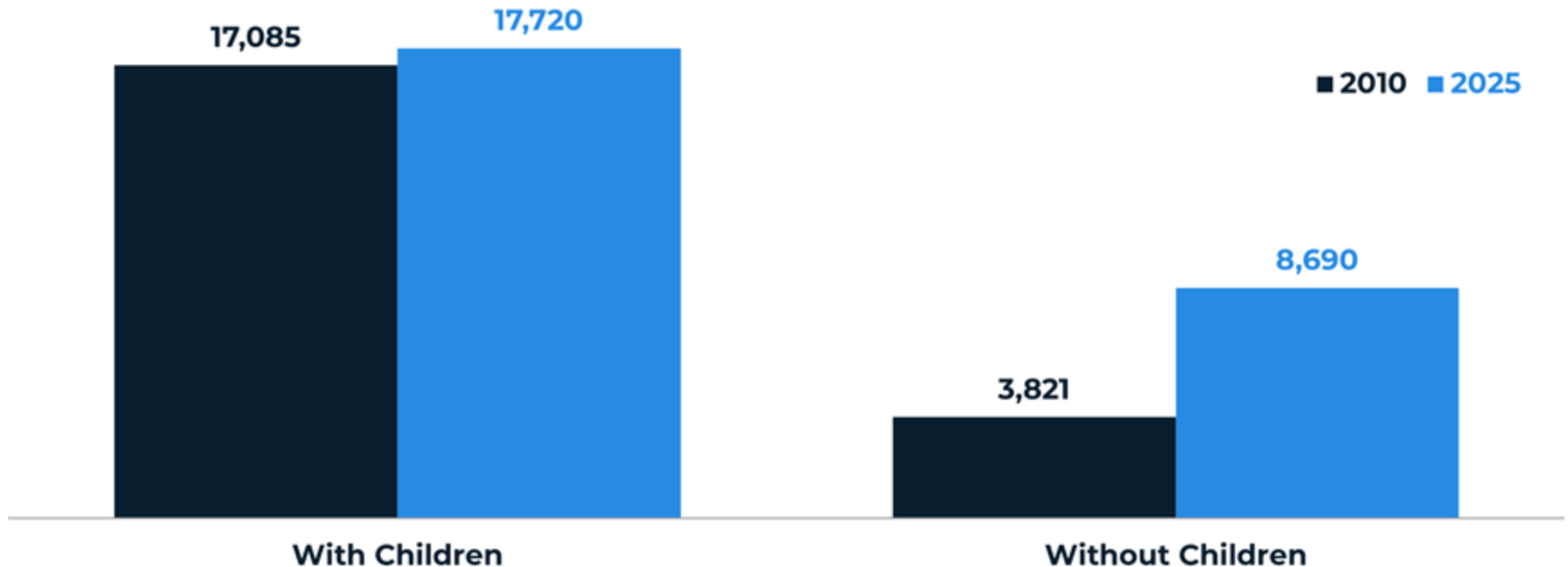


Note: Cost burdened is defined as paying more than 35% of monthly household income on housing.

Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

31% of Boston households with children are overcrowded such that occupants exceed bedrooms by more than one

Overcrowded Boston households by presence of children, 2010 & 2025



Note: A home is overcrowded if the number of occupants - the number of bedrooms is > 1 . For example, 4 people in a 2 bedroom apartment.

Sources: 2008-2012 American Community Survey and 2025 City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Population Estimate, Research Division Analysis

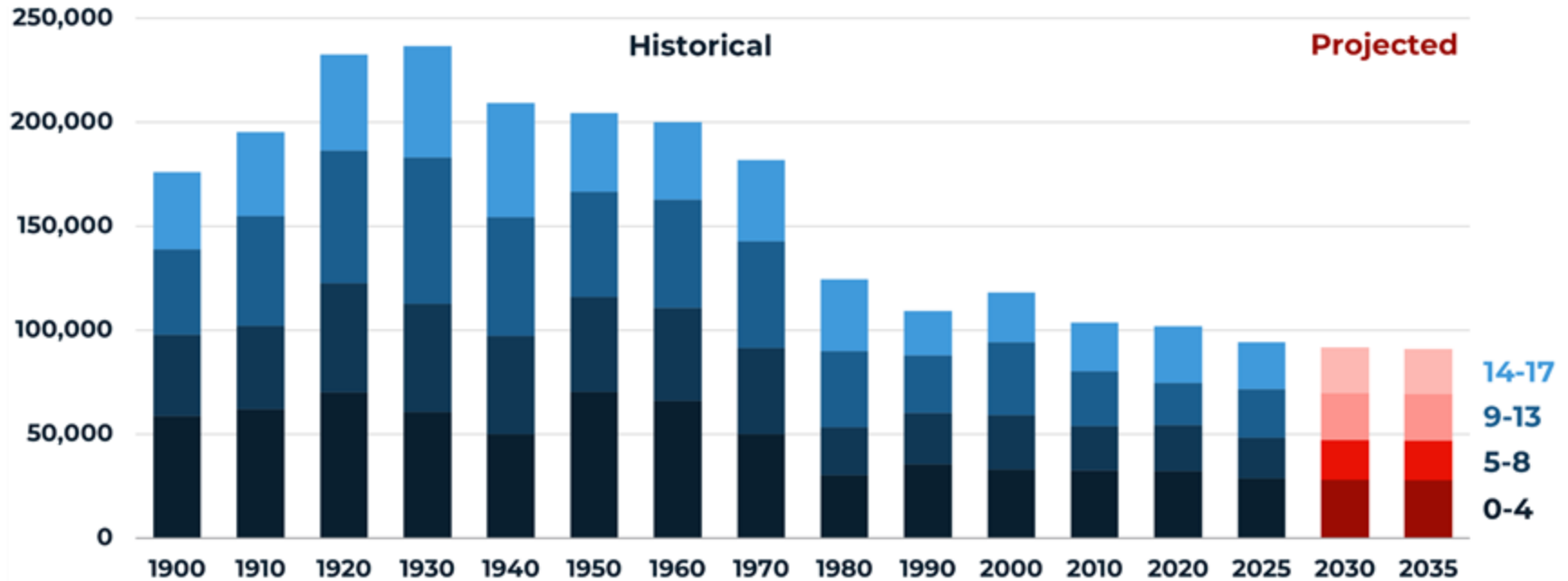
Boston's child population is projected to decline slightly through 2035



City of Boston
Planning Department

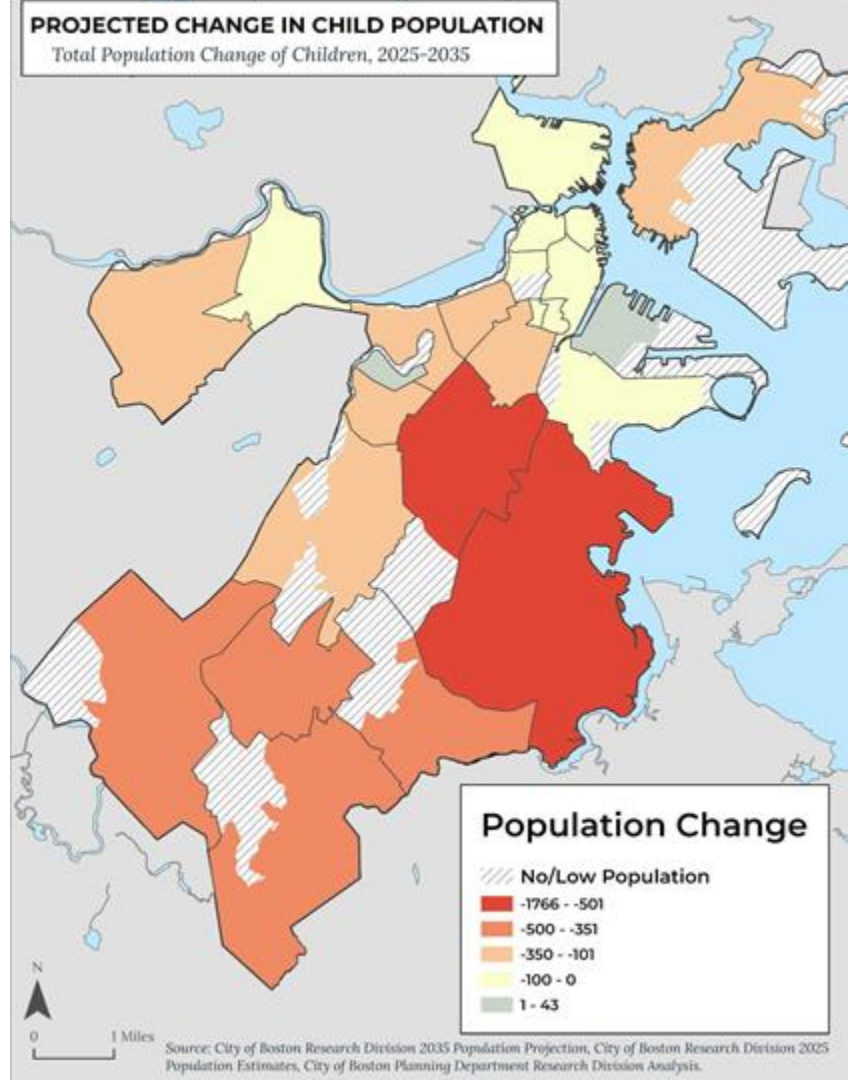
The population of children in Boston is projected to decline slightly from 94,217 in 2025 to 90,965 in 2035

Age distribution of Boston's children population, 1900 to 2025, projected through 2035

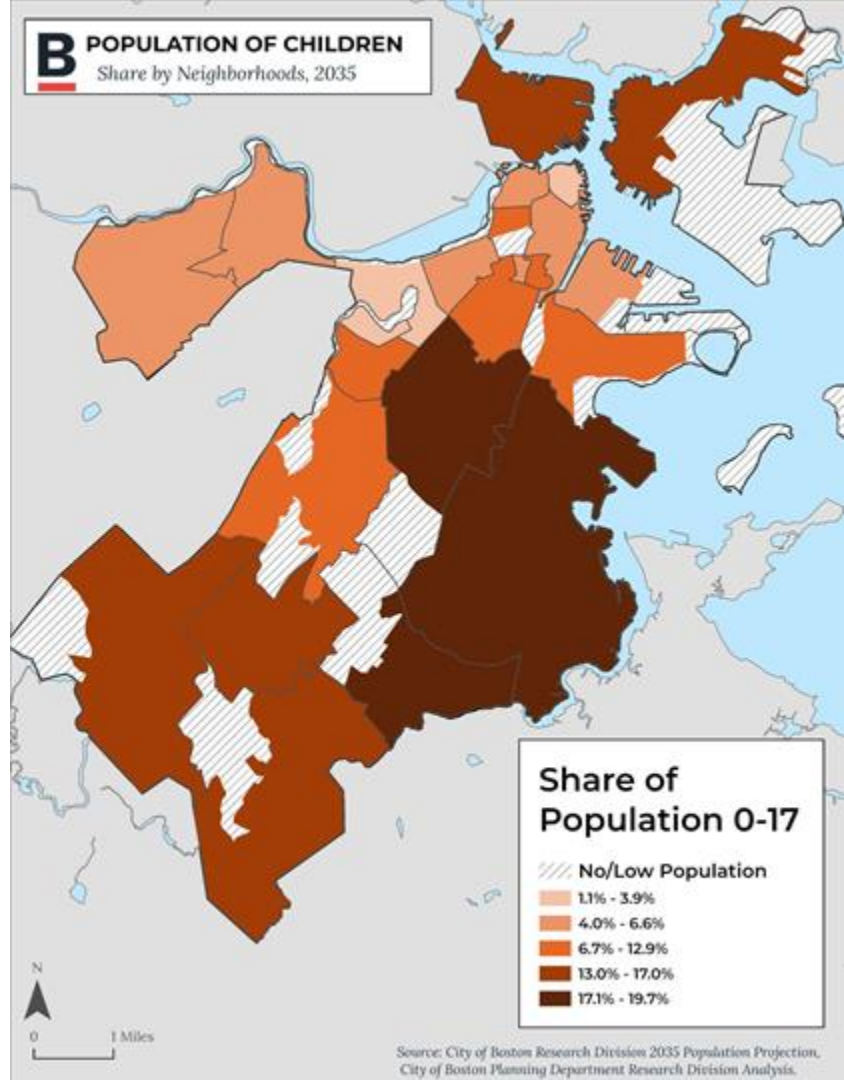


Source: 1900 to 2010 Decennial Census, Research Division 2020 & 2025 Population Estimates, and 2030 & 2035 Population Projections, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Most neighborhoods are projected to have **declining child populations** from 2025-2035, and the neighborhoods with the largest child populations will see the largest absolute declines



Despite population declines, the child population in 2035 is projected to still be concentrated in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



BOSTON'S COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN & FAMILIES



The Office of Early Childhood was established in 2022 to advance the Mayor Wu's Administration's vision of making Boston *First for Families*. We support the wellbeing and flourishing of all infants, toddlers, and children growing up in the City of Boston.

A nighttime photograph of a city street, likely in Chicago, featuring a church with a dome in the background, trees decorated with lights, and people walking on the sidewalk. The image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent band containing the main title.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



INITIATIVES

CHILD CARE & EDUCATION

Accessibility, Quality & Affordability

Support for Family Child Care, we have different training and resources for aspiring and current FCCs, to help them start, sustain and grow their business.

Quality Affordability Accessibility

Expansion of Boston Pre-K in community based organizations and FCCs, to ensure every three and four-year-old in Boston has access to high-quality early education.

Quality Affordability Accessibility

Great Starts provides access to child care and PK-12 school information for all children in Boston. It simplifies the registration process and generates more traffic and visibility for BPS.

Accessibility

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Resources for children (0 - 22)

Connect, Learn, Explore Mayor's commitment to ensure every child can learn to bike, swim and access sports, arts, and gardening. Going beyond basic needs to help children discover their interests.

Well-being Health

Kids and Climate, improve response and resources in heat emergencies for families and children, who are uniquely vulnerable to heat

Health

International Day of Play, an annual family-friendly celebration of the power of play with sports, biking, games, arts and crafts, music, and more.

Well-being Health

Youth Cycling Program, visits BPS schools and youth organizations with bikes, instructors, & an active curriculum that builds safety skills & gets students riding.

Well-being Health

CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Initiatives to promote ECD & youth

Boston Reads, early literacy campaign to build a culture of reading. It unites early literacy programs across City departments & provides a flexible umbrella for partners to collaborate and grow together under a shared literacy vision.

ECD

Neighborhoods As The Unit Of Change, pilot in Mattapan that engages residents and local institutions to produce a blueprint so all residents, especially children and youth ages 0-22, can thrive.

Youth ECD

Advanced Math, opportunities for BPS students to participate in math competitions outside the classroom and to build teacher capacity to support learning during the school day.

Youth

Initiatives focused on making Boston the most **family friendly city**.

Data collection to inform current and future initiatives

FAMILY CHILD CARE



GREAT STARTS



Boston Pre-K in Community Settings Registration

Boston Public Schools Registration

How to Use Great Starts Explore

Learn About Your Options

Contact



Enter an address to find nearby schools



Filter

Keyword

Saved Schools

Check eligibility

Distance

Please enter an address to enable filter by distance.

Boston Pre-K

Yes

Head Start

Yes

Language Programming

Yes

Ages/Grades

Infant

Toddler

3 yrs old (K0)

4 yrs old (K1)

5 yrs old (K2)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Provider Type

Boston Public School

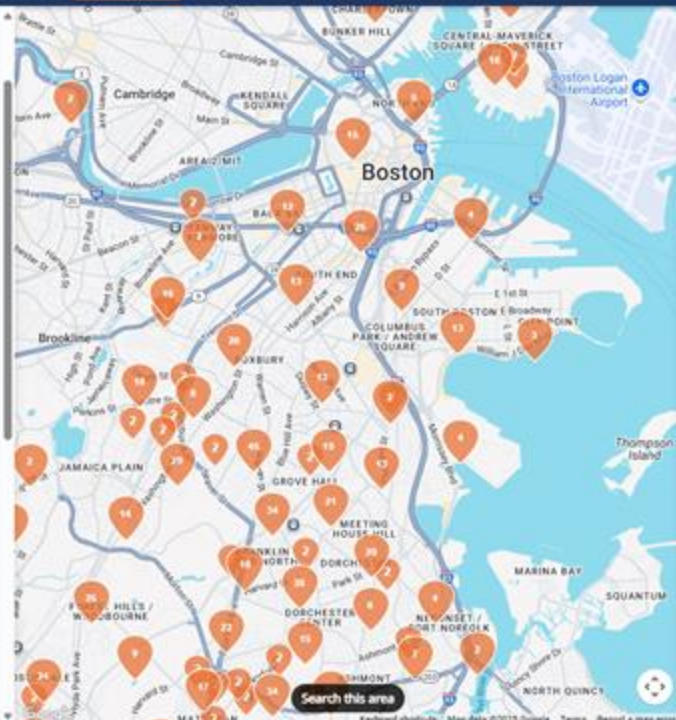
Community Based Organization

Family Child Care

Charter School

Independent School

Independent Special Education School



582 Schools

Sort By

Name

A Child's View
0yr - 5yr



A.M.A. Family Daycare
0yr - 5yr



AB Child Care
0yr - 5yr



ABCD Allston Head Start & Children's Services
3yr - 5yr



ABCD Bradshaw Head Start & Children's Services
0yr - 5yr



ABCD Brighton Head Start & Children's Services
0yr - 5yr



This data represents schools and programs for the 2025-26 school year and is subject to change. Great Starts would love your feedback: <https://forms.gle/1dDr6yBa6SHG27>

Feedback | Terms of Service | Powered by Avella

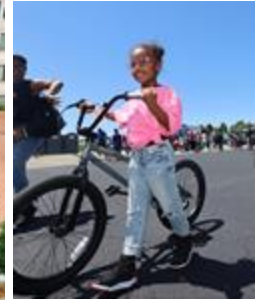
CONNECT, LEARN, EXPLORE



Bike Towns



Summer Biking



Youth Cycling Program

KIDS AND CLIMATE



KEEPING KIDS COOL THIS SUMMER

The City of Boston is preparing for extreme heat this Summer

[EXTREME HEAT](#) [DEHIDRATION HEAT ACTION](#) [UNDESIRABLE HEAT EVENTS](#) [EMERGENCY ALERTS](#) [HEAT PLAN](#)

Hot weather affects infants and young children more than most adults. Heat's potential impacts on childhood health and development can be blinding. All children should have the opportunity to safely play, learn, and thrive in summer, so it is critical to understand how heat affects children and what we can do to keep them safe.

You can find city-wide general resources on extreme heat here: <https://www.boston.gov/heat>. Look below for resources specific to promoting strong children.

SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS IN KIDS

- More irritable than usual
- Confusion, dizziness, or fatigue
- Excessive sweating or crying without tears
- Weakness or muscle cramps
- Fast heart rate or shortness of breath

- Keep kids hydrated**
- Offer more human milk/formula for infants**
- Protect skin with light clothes and sunscreen**
- Keep medications ready and cool**
- Keep cool with AC, shade, showers, and ventilation**

KEEP KIDS COOL

in Mattapan!

WHAT IS EXTREME HEAT?

When temperatures are above 90°F during the day and 70°F at night, especially when it's also humid or lasts more than one day, it can be uncomfortable to stay indoors and sometimes results in heat-related illness.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT KIDS?

Infants and young children are impacted by extreme heat differently than adults because their smaller bodies heat up more quickly and they sweat less. They rely on adults to keep them cool and hydrated and look for signs of heat illness.

GET PREPARED

- Keep plenty of cool drinking water and fruit juices (low sugar).
- Prepare cool foods like popsicles, watermelon, cucumber, and berries.
- Wear sunscreen (SPF 30+).
- Gather cooling fans, spray bottles, wet towels, and ice cubes.
- Cover windows with curtains, blinds, towels or foil to block sunlight.
- Charge devices and consider backup power supplies.
- Keep medications in e.g., lockers, insulin, Epinephrine ready and cool.
- Install and test air conditioners and fans.

SIGNS OF HEAT ILLNESS IN KIDS

- More irritable than usual
- Confusion, dizziness, or fatigue
- Excessive sweating or crying without tears
- Weakness or muscle cramps
- Fast heart rate or shortness of breath

ON A HOT DAY

- Plan outdoor activities in cooler hours (before 8am, after 6pm)
- Find shade if playing outdoors (e.g., trees)
- Watch for signs of discomfort or heat-related illness while playing
- Stay hydrated and keep skin cool with mist and wet towels
- Dress kids in loose-fitting, light clothing and apply sunscreen
- Plan indoor games, water play, and non-stressful play
- Plan meals that don't require an oven or stove
- Provide extra human milk or formula for infants

CARING FOR INFANTS

Infants need extra care in the heat. Keep them out of direct sunlight, offer more human milk or formula for hydration, and cool their skin with a damp washcloth (especially while feeding).

KEEP KIDS COOL

in Mattapan!



COOLING CENTERS

Air-conditioned spaces that are free and open to the public during declared heat emergencies. Some Cooling Centers will also provide fun children's programming.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Available to all residents to use and free the heat with air conditioning, books, and summer programming for kids, teens, and adults. Be sure to check opening hours!

SWIMMING POOLS

80% have indoor pools across the City that are open to the public. Be sure to register for times for swim using the 311 website.

SPLASH PADS

Water features in outdoor parks and playgrounds with where kids can play, stay cool, and have fun!

RESOURCES Visit [Boston.gov/heat](https://www.boston.gov/heat) for the latest map of the city's cooling resources

Sign up to Boston Emergency Alerts for notifications about extreme heat emergencies

Call 311 for any emergency city services during a heat wave

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PLAY

At City Hall Plaza



Beyond City Hall Plaza

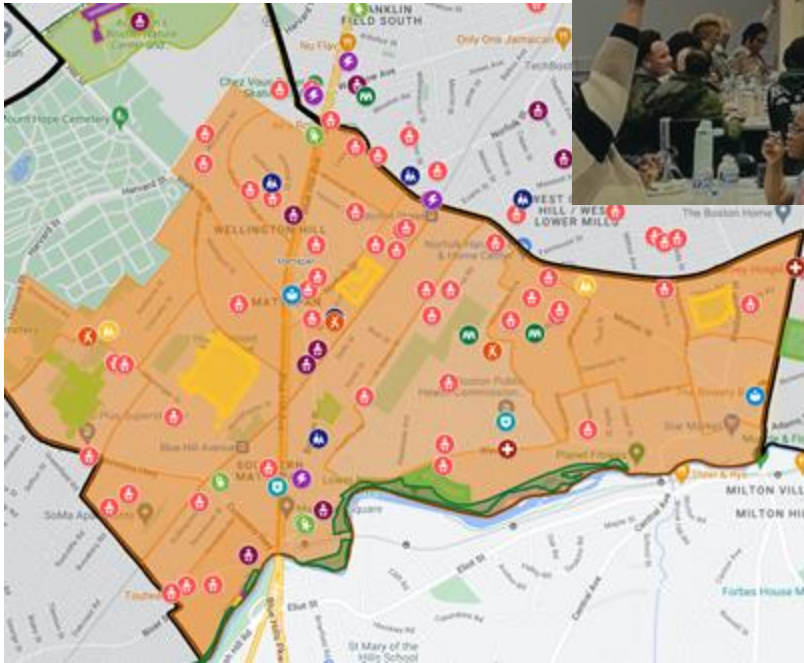


EARLY LITERACY CAMPAIGN

BOSTON READS



NEIGHBORHOODS AS THE UNIT OF CHANGE



ADVANCED MATH

In School Programming



Teacher Learning & Professional Development through the
Telescope Network

After School Programming

Advanced Math
Clubs and Competitions



DATA COLLECTION



Help us shape a City childcare policy that works for all.

TAKE THE CITY OF BOSTON CHILDCARE SURVEY

CITY OF BOSTON



City of Boston Childcare Survey

City of Boston Child Care Survey

We want to hear from families like yours! This survey will help us learn about your experiences with:

- Child care for children ages 0-5
- Before- and after-school care for children up to age 13
- How you use and feel about public spaces with your kids

Your feedback will help shape programs, spaces, and policies that better serve Boston families. The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete, and your answers will be kept confidential.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN BETWEEN BIRTH TO AGE 13, PLEASE DO NOT COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

◀ Previous Next ▶



Findings on the Supply and Demand of Child Care in 2024

A CITY FOR FAMILIES: ADDRESSING THE CHILD CARE GAPS IN BOSTON

Paula Garcia Villarreal, City of Boston Office of Early Childhood
Birth to Eight Collaborative Data Committee

THE ACCESS GAP

In 2024, the gap of seats for children ages birth to 5 in Boston was 33%, a decrease of 6% compared to 2022. Most neighborhoods in the city had a smaller gap, except for Downtown, Janssca Plain/Mission Hill, and East Boston, where the gap increased.

Four out of five neighborhoods in Boston have a gap of seats for children ages birth to 5. At 50%, Charlestown is the neighborhood with the highest gap; only one out of two children would find a seat in a licensed child care setting.