BOSTON'S HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Over Time, in 2025, and the Challenges They Face

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Planning Department
RESEARCH DIVISION

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Use of our work **requires** the inclusion of the following citation: "*City of Boston Research Division Analysis.*."

BOSTON'S HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

1. **DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AFFECTING HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN**
   What trends affect children & households with children?
2. **SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN**
   Where do households with children live?
3. **SHIFTING HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS**
   How have households with children changed over time?
4. **HOUSING OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN**
   What kind of housing do households with children live in?
5. **FINANCES OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN**
   What financial situations are households with children in? What housing cost burdens do they face?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Boston's households with children are shrinking in number and size - 55% have only one child - and many are struggling financially despite a recent trend towards higher incomes



MIGRATION & BIRTH RATES

Long-standing pattern of out migration of young children continues, but low birth rates are driving decline in children



HOUSING COST BURDEN

~52% of rental households are cost burdened, similar to 2010



HIGHER INCOME

33% of households with children earn above 500% of poverty line

INTRODUCTION & DEFINITIONS

Similar to national trends, Boston has seen households with children decline.

Research questions guiding this analysis:

- *How do households with children **compare to other households** in the city?*
- ***Where** do households with children live? How has this changed over time?*
- ***Who** are Boston's households with children?*
- *What kind of **housing** do households with children live in?*
- *What **housing cost burdens** do households with children face?*

Terms & Definitions:



Householder
Person in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented, or any adult member. The person designated as the householder is the "reference person" to whom the relationship of all other household members, if any, is recorded.



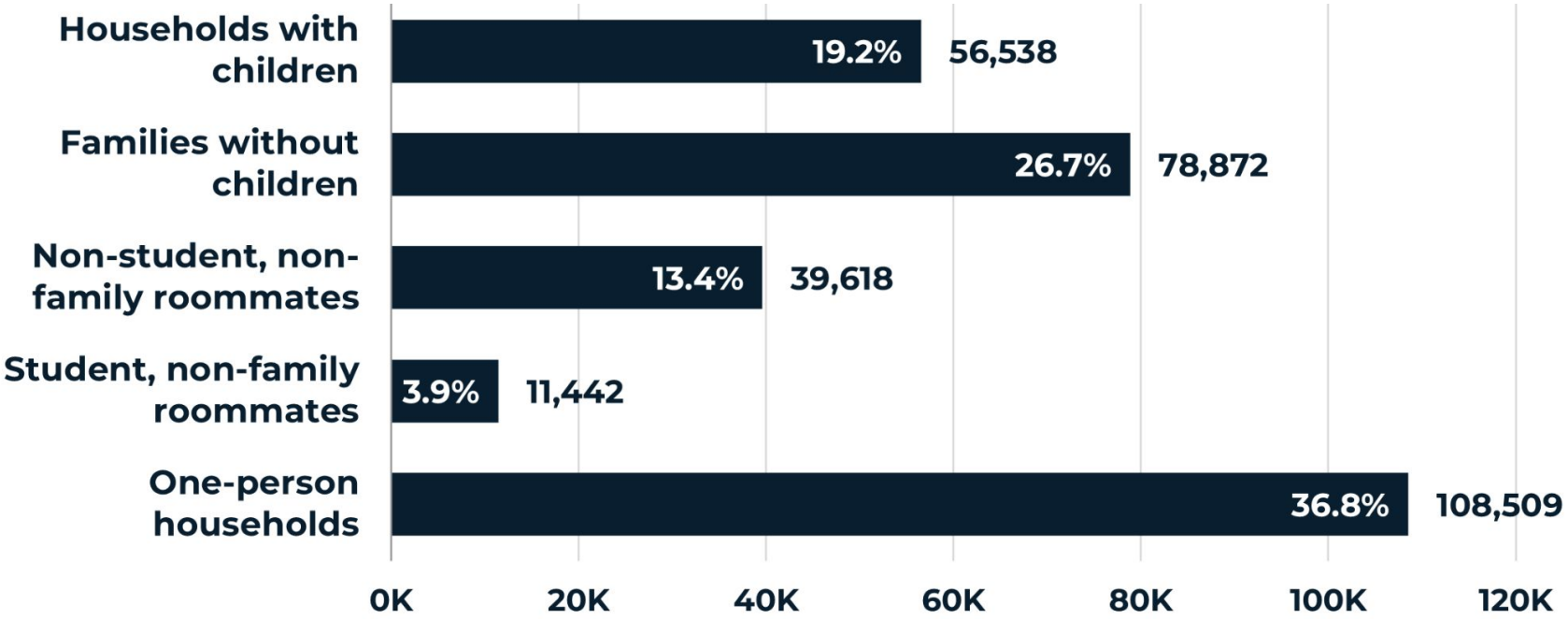
Households with children
Households with children aged 0-17. Does not require relation.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AFFECTING HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

How do local and national trends affect households with children in Boston?

Boston has ~56,000 households with children under 18

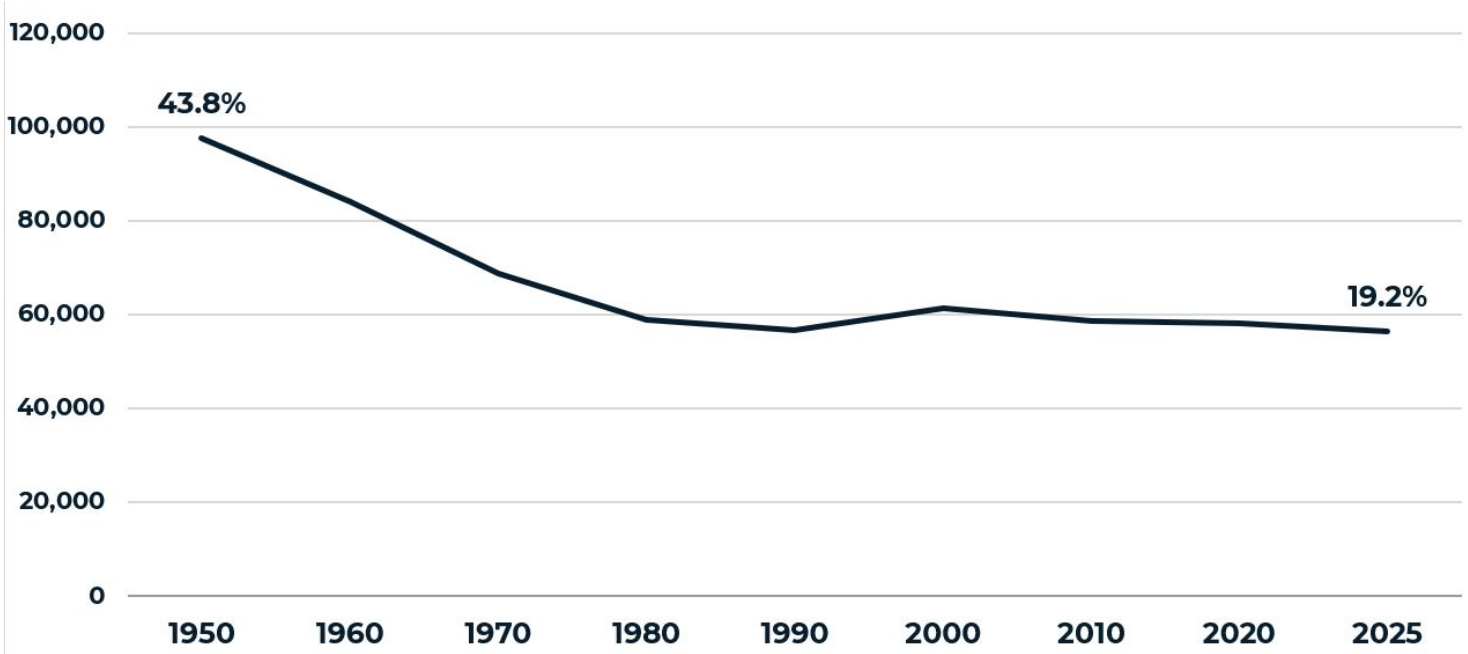
Boston Households by Type, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

In 1950, households with children made up 44%of all households in Boston - but dropped to 19% by 2025

Boston Households with Children, 1950 to 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1950-2010 Decennial Censuses, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; 2020 and 2025 City of Boston Research Division Estimates

Boston is not unique: its 6.4 percentage point decline in share of households with children from 2010 to 2024 places it 12th out of 25 peer cities

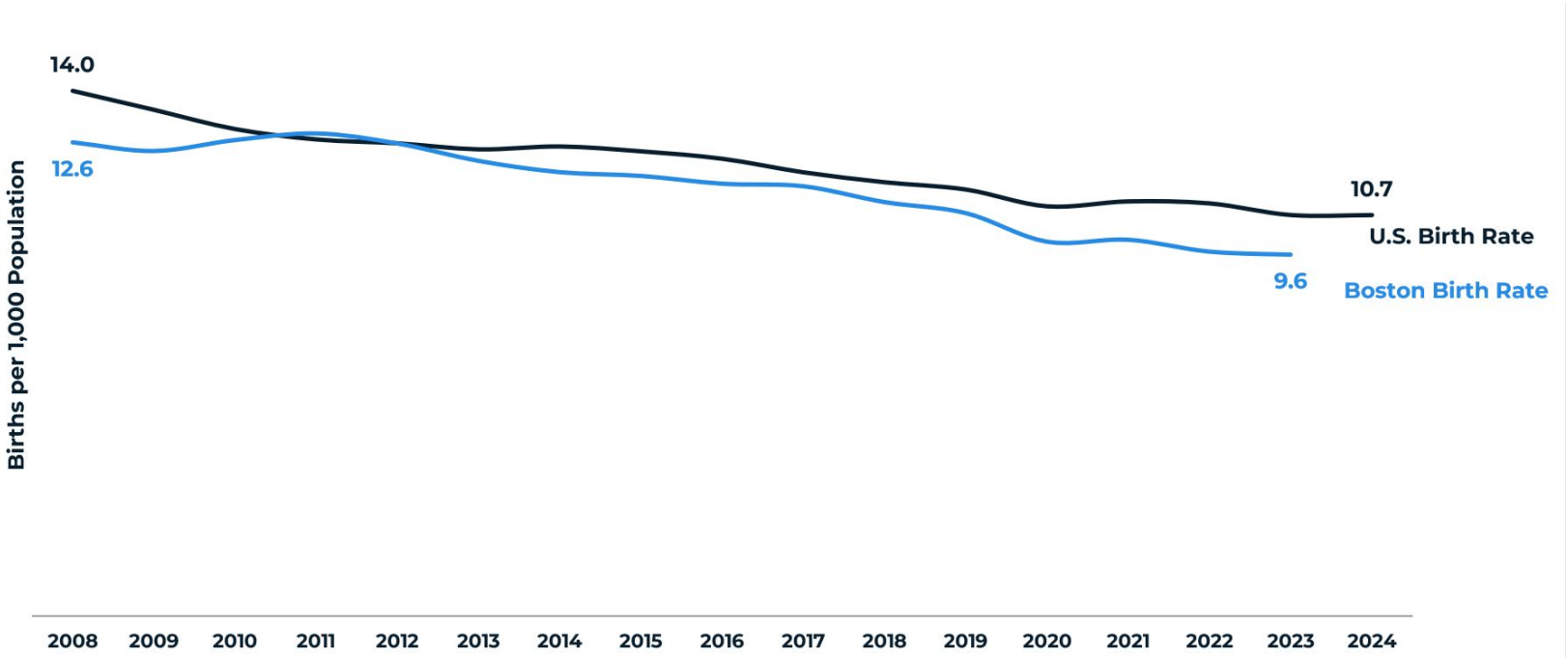
Peer Cities Share of Households that have Minor Children*

RANK	PEER CITY	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE	2010	2024
1	Washington, District of Columbia	+0.5%	19.2%	19.7%
2	San Francisco, California	-2.1%	18.0%	15.9%
3	Minneapolis, Minnesota	-3.4%	21.4%	18.0%
4	Seattle, Washington	-3.7%	19.4%	15.8%
5	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	-4.1%	27.0%	22.9%
		...		
12	Boston, Massachusetts	-6.4%	23.7%	17.4%
		...		
23	Austin, Texas	-8.2%	29.8%	21.6%
24	Los Angeles, California	-8.3%	33.2%	24.9%
25	San Jose, California	-8.5%	39.4%	30.9%

Source: 2010 & 2024 American Community Surveys, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.
Note: These cities are principal cities in the nation's largest metropolitan areas, plus three cities (San Jose, Austin, and Raleigh) whose highly educated metropolitan area populations make them good comparisons for Boston. The Boston estimate uses unadjusted American Community Survey data for 2024.*

The recent decline in the number of children in Boston is mostly due to declining birth rates, which mirror national trends

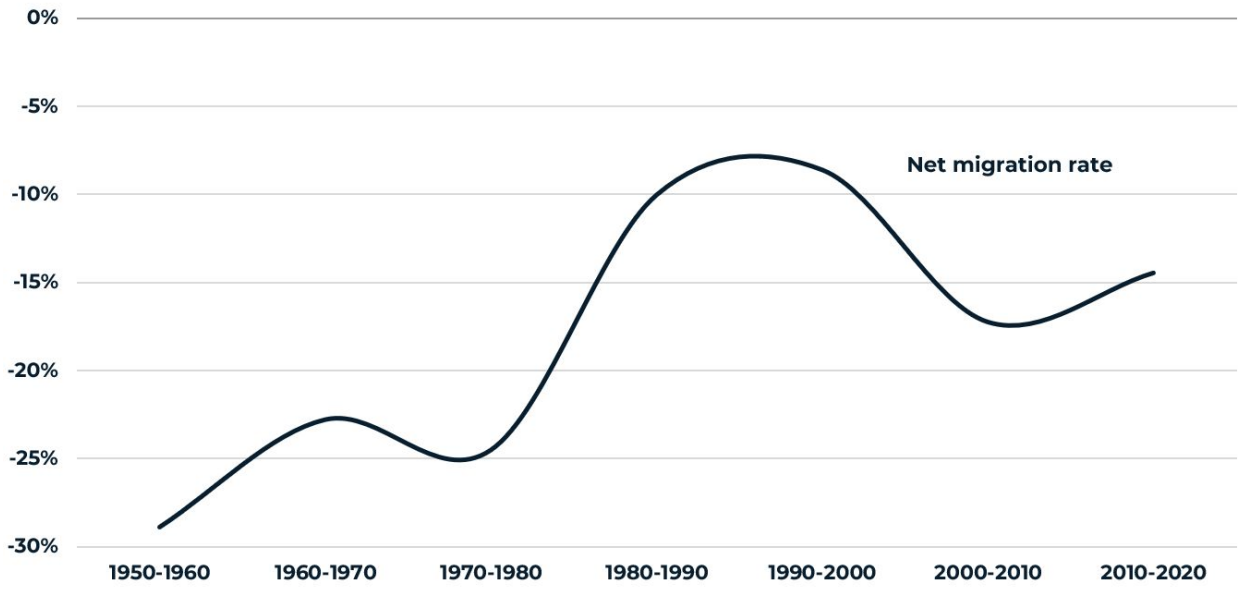
Birth Rates in Boston, 2008-2024



Source: Boston Public Health Commission & Center for Disease Control and Prevention & American Community Survey & Research Division Population Estimates, City of Boston Research Division Analysis

Young children have long seen significant negative net migration from Boston

Boston 10-Year Net Migration Rate, From Birth to 4 Years Old to 10 to 14 Years Old, 1950-1960 to 2010-2020



The age cohort that was aged 0-4 in 2010 was 15% smaller ten years later due to outmigration

In the peak of suburbanization in the 1950s-70s, birth cohorts would lose ~25% of their size over 10 years

Source: 1950 to 2010 Decennial Censuses & 2020 Research Division Population Estimate, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

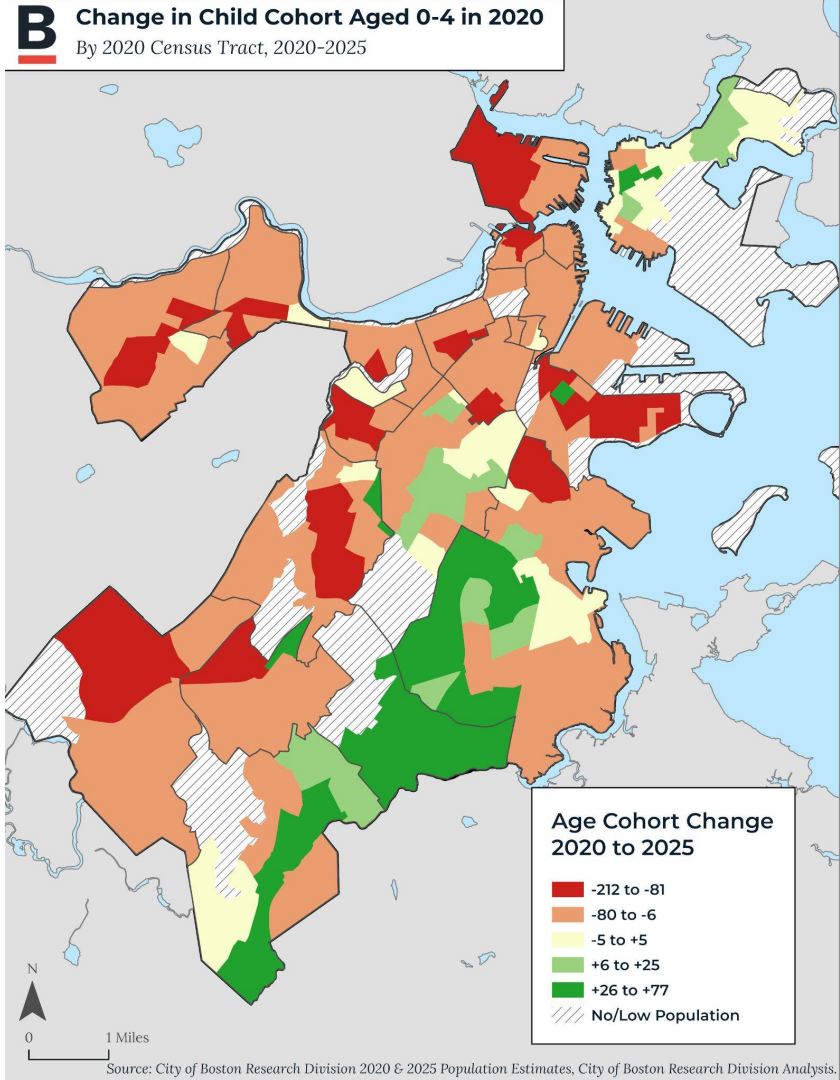
SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Where do households with children live?

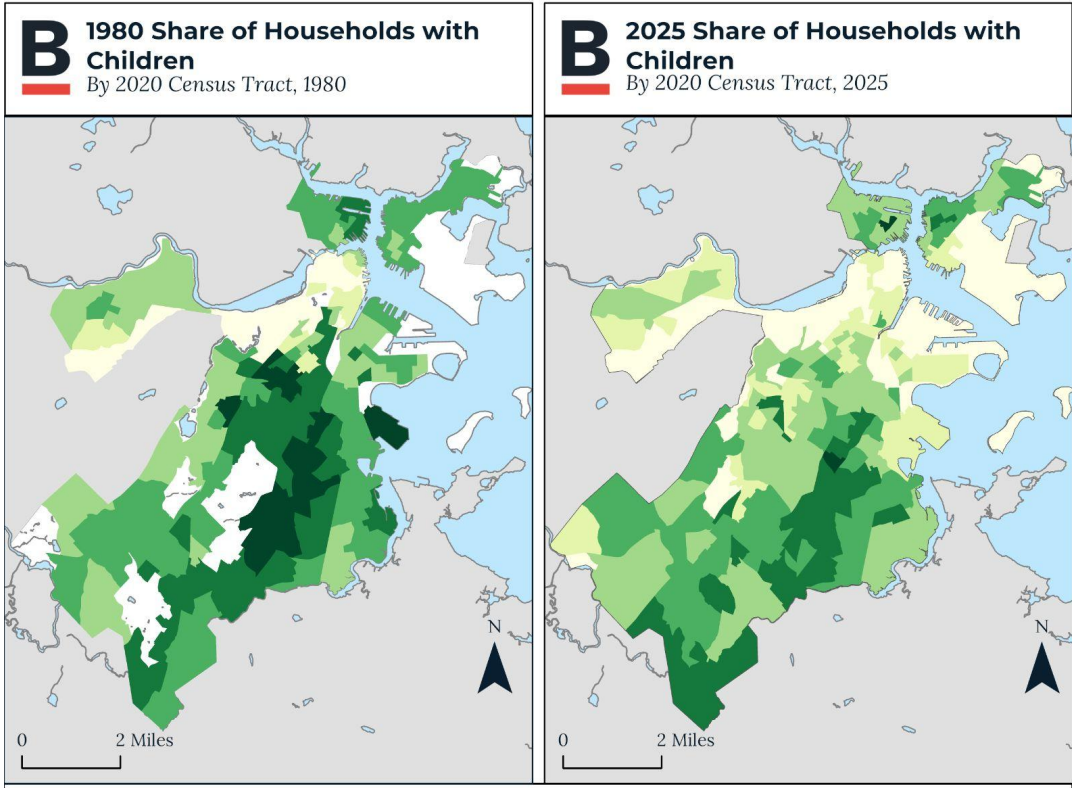
Over the past 5 years, most Census tracts in Boston saw young children move out as they aged, with only some seeing more move in

Tracts in **East Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park** were more likely to see **NET POSITIVE** migration of children, meaning that families with children tended to move **TO** these areas, some as new immigrants

Tracts in the rest of the city are more likely to see **NET NEGATIVE** migration of children, meaning that many children moved **FROM** these areas in their first five to ten years of life



Households with children continue to be concentrated in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park, as they were in 1980

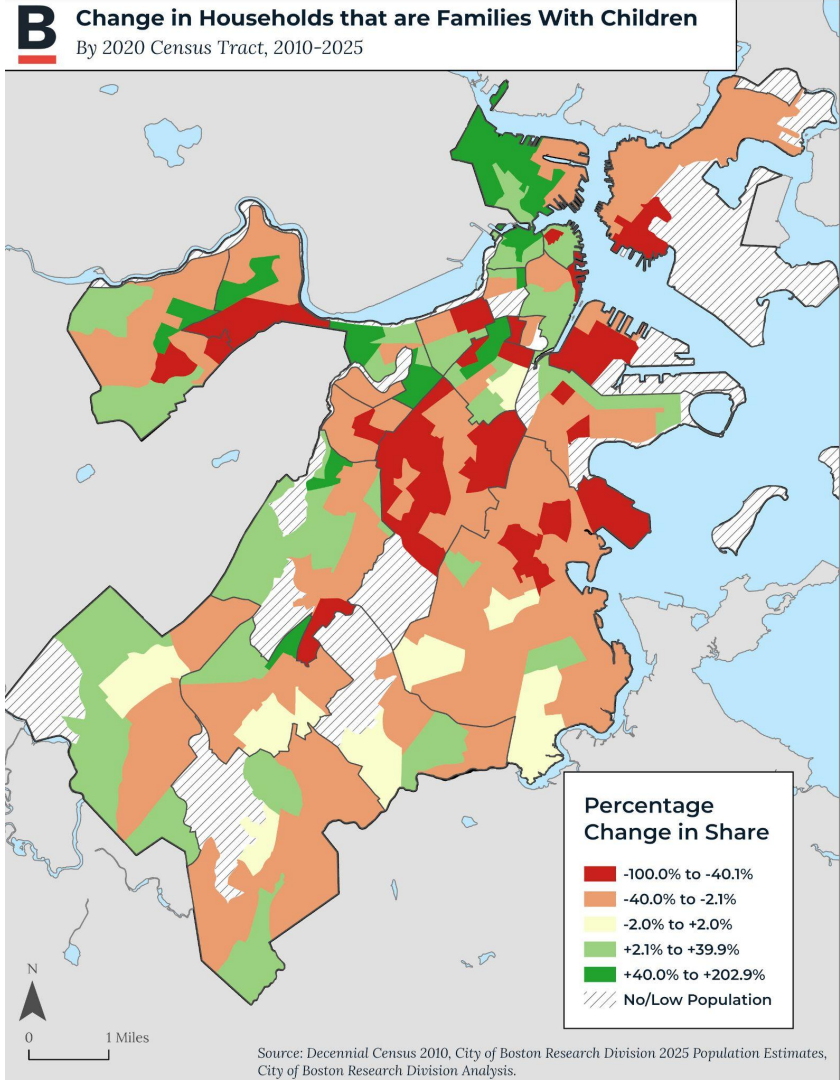


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; City of Boston Research Division 2025 Population Estimates, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Recent trends show families with children today are living in different places than in 2010

East Boston (-12.8 pp) and **Roxbury (-11.7 pp)** saw the largest **percentage-point declines** in the share of households with children.

In contrast, **Charlestown** saw a **5.9 percentage point increase**, the **largest gain** of any Boston neighborhood, despite net negative migration of children as they age

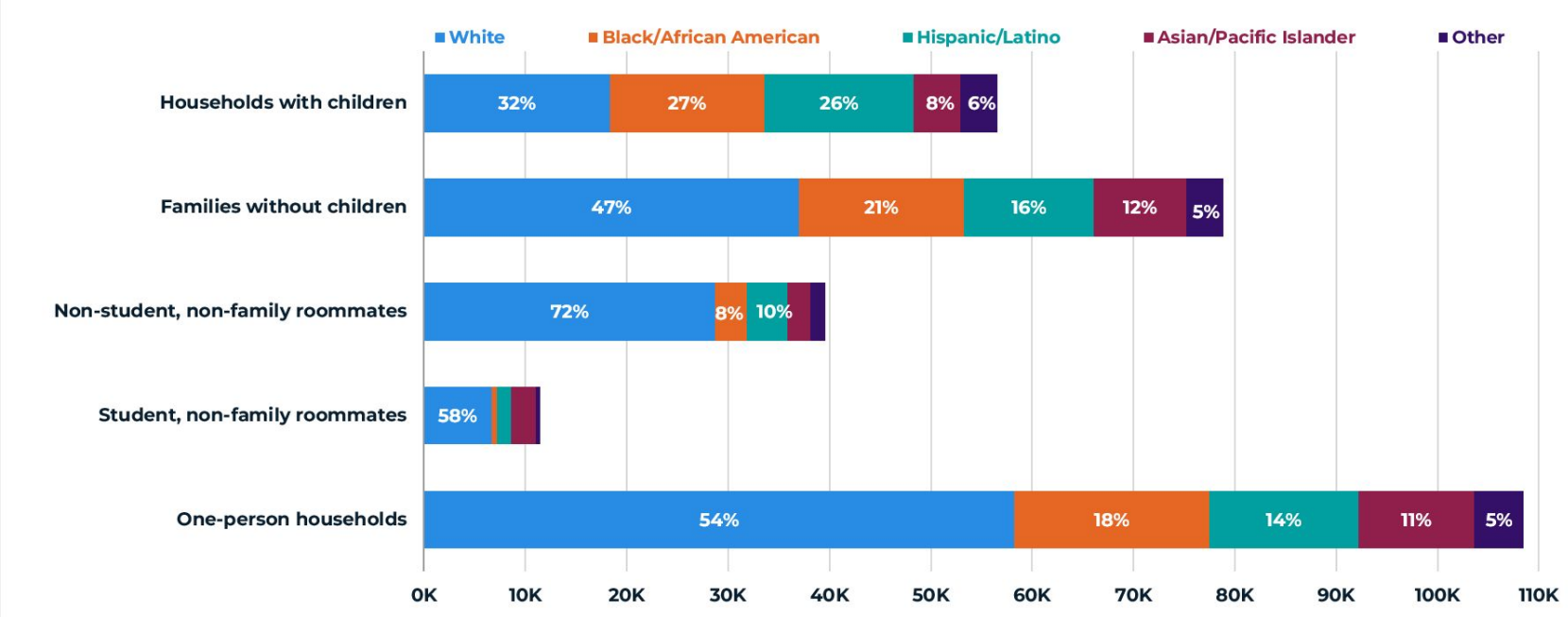


SHIFTING HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS

How have households with children changed over time?

Householders with children are relatively more racially diverse than other householders in Boston

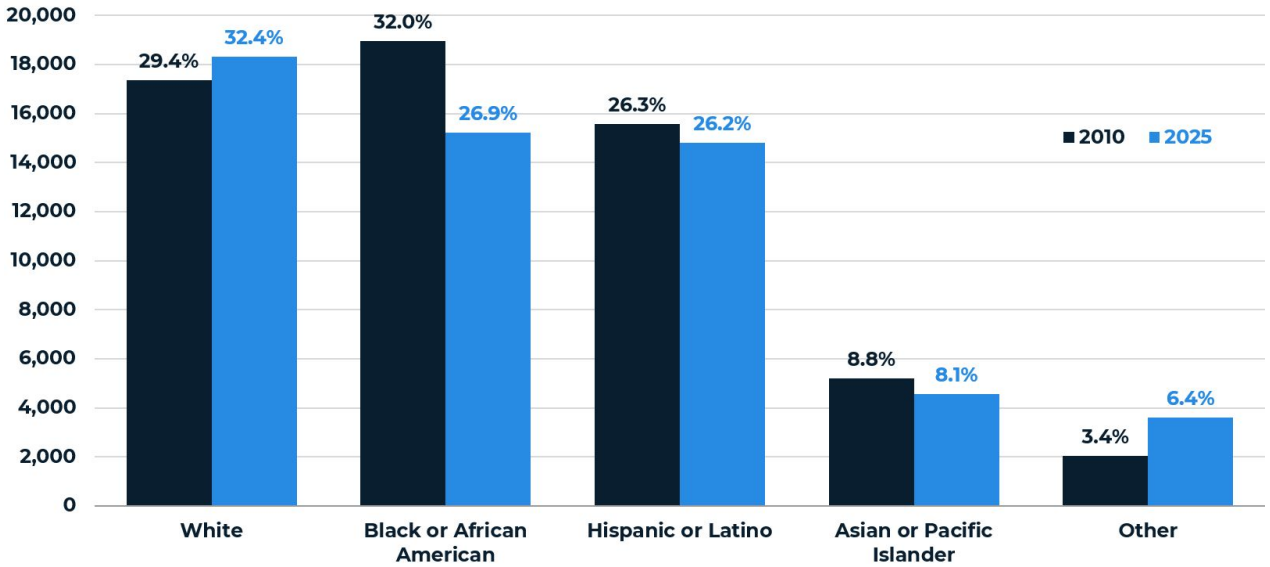
Boston Households by Type & Race/Ethnicity of Householder, 2025*



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.
Note: The householder is defined as one of the adults in whose name the household is owned or rented – typically the adult who responds to the Census Bureau survey.*

The number and share of Non-Hispanic White householders with children in Boston increased since 2010

Households with Children by Race/Ethnicity of Householder, 2010 & 2025

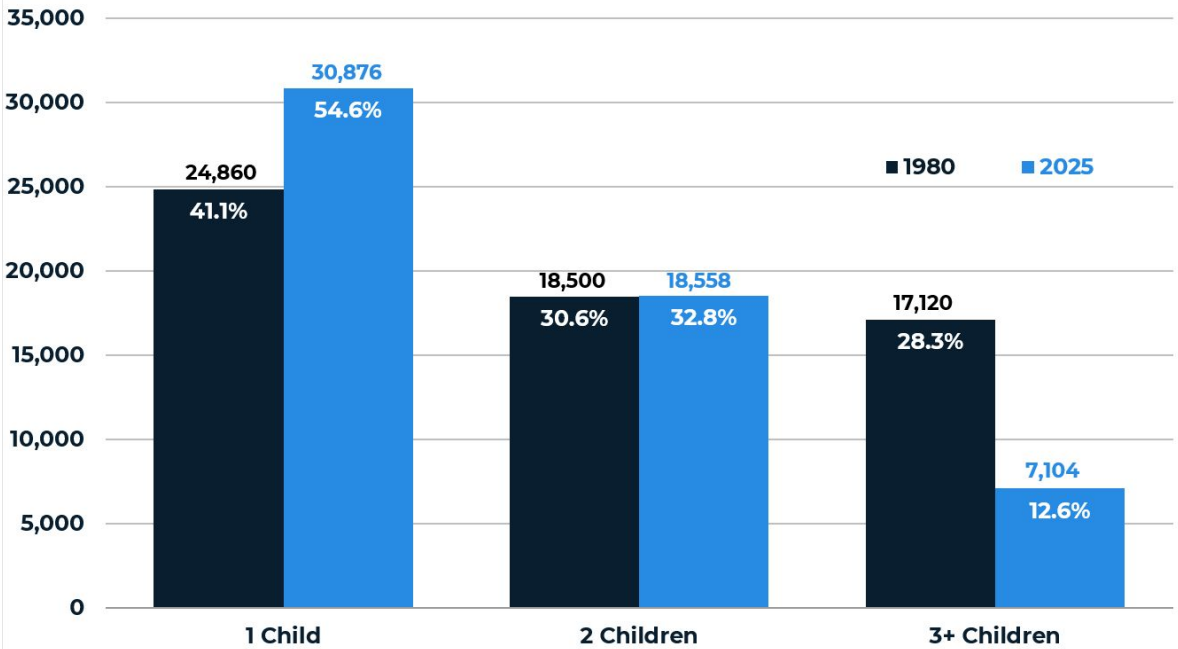


The shift in Black/African American and "Other" categories may be partially explained by changes in Census Bureau race and ethnicity classification methodologies.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.
Note: The U.S. Census Bureau's methodology for classifying race and ethnicity after the 2010 Decennial Census. Please see the Division's report Race and Ethnicity in the 2020 Census: Self-Identification or Classification for more details. This may in part contribute to the significant increase in the "Other" category between 2010 and 2025. Cape Verdeans and Brazilians were classified as "some other race" and included the "Other" category not as Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino.

Lower birth rates have led to smaller families with children: by 2025, the share of households with 3+ children fell from 28% in 1980 to just 13%

Boston Households with Children by Number of Children, 1980 & 2025

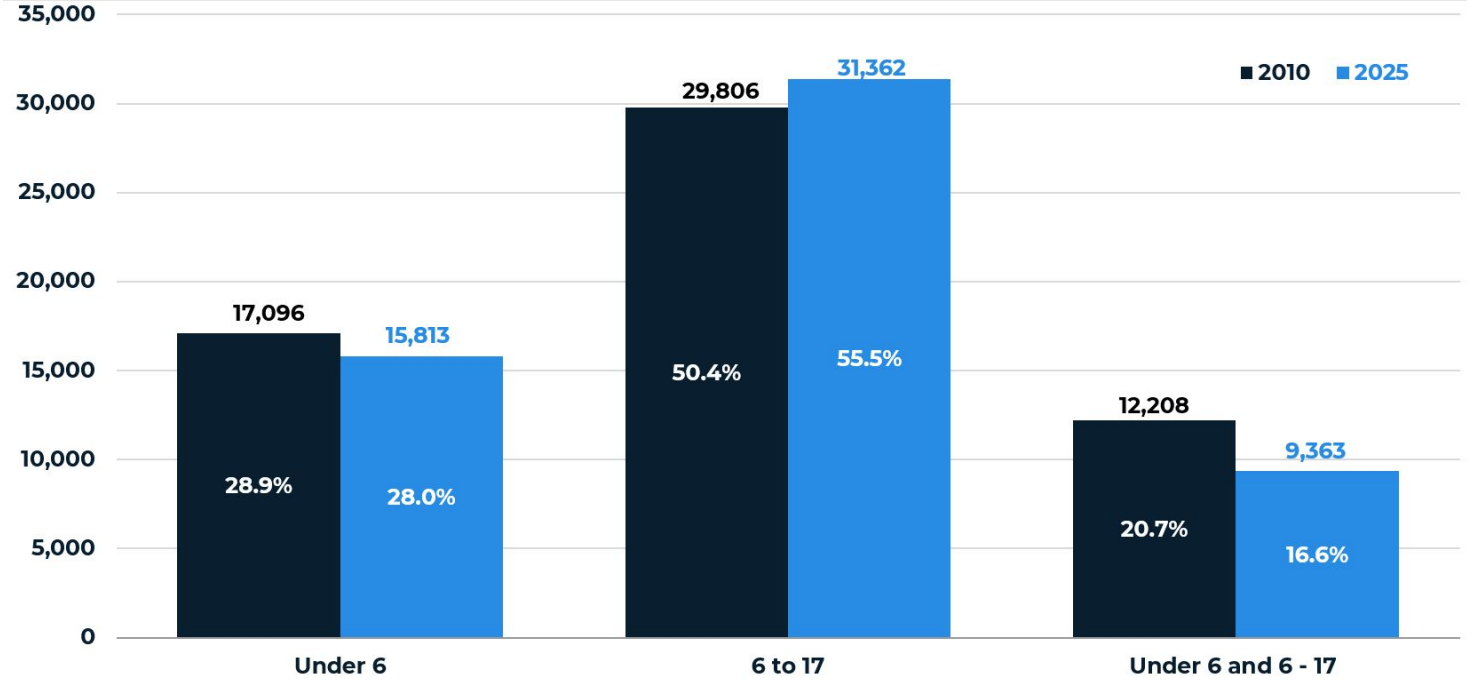


Single-child households grew from **41.1% to 54.6%** of all households with children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; 2020 Research Division Population Estimate, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

~28% of households with children have only a child/children under age 6, while about half have only children aged 6+

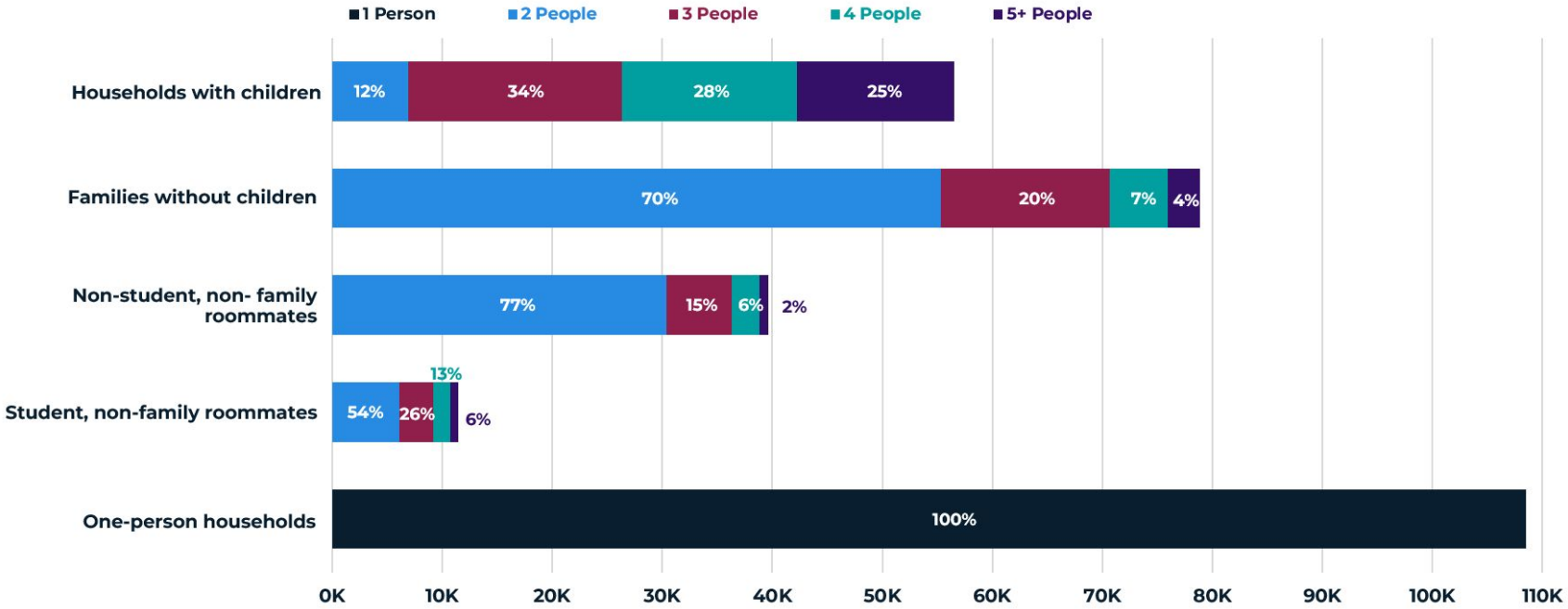
Households with Children by Age of Child, 2010 & 2025



Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Households with children are larger, averaging 3.83 people

Boston Households by Household Type and Number of People in Household, 2025



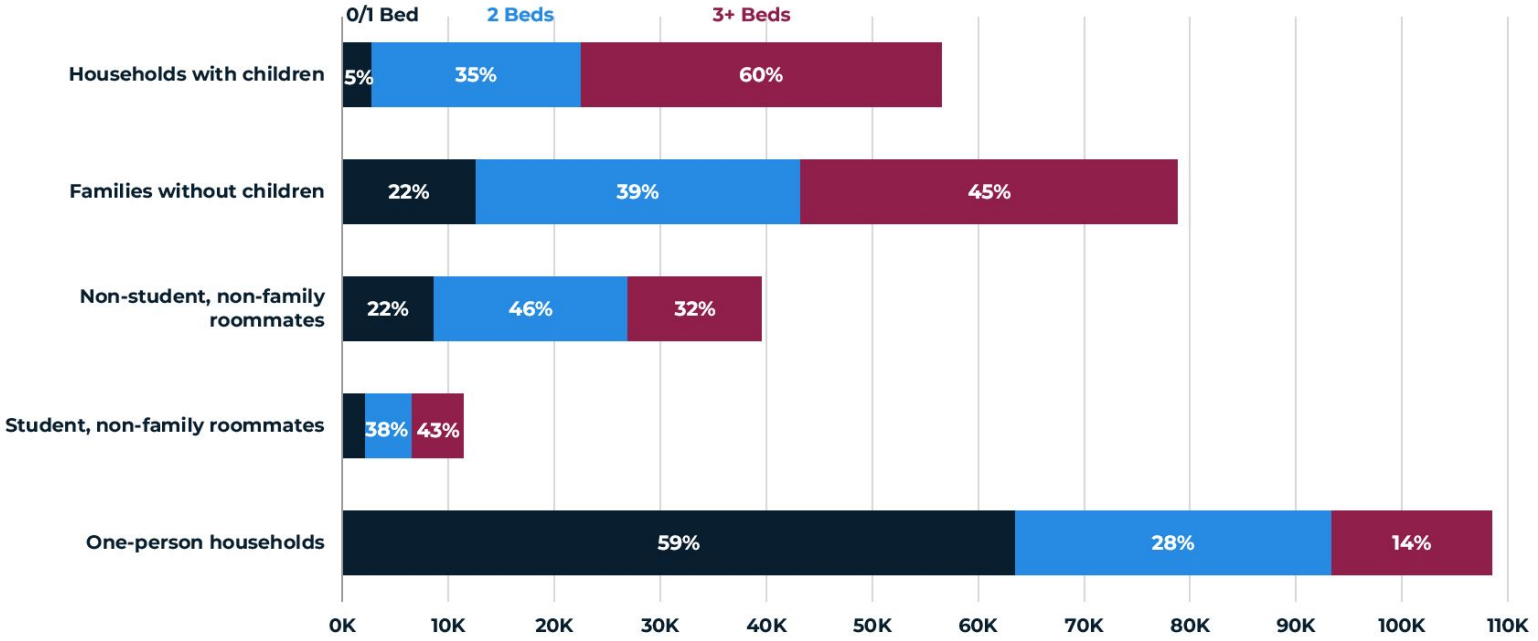
Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

HOUSING OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

What kind of housing do households with children live in?

Households with children tend to live in the city's larger units: 60% live in homes with 3+ bedrooms, and another 35% in 2-bedrooms

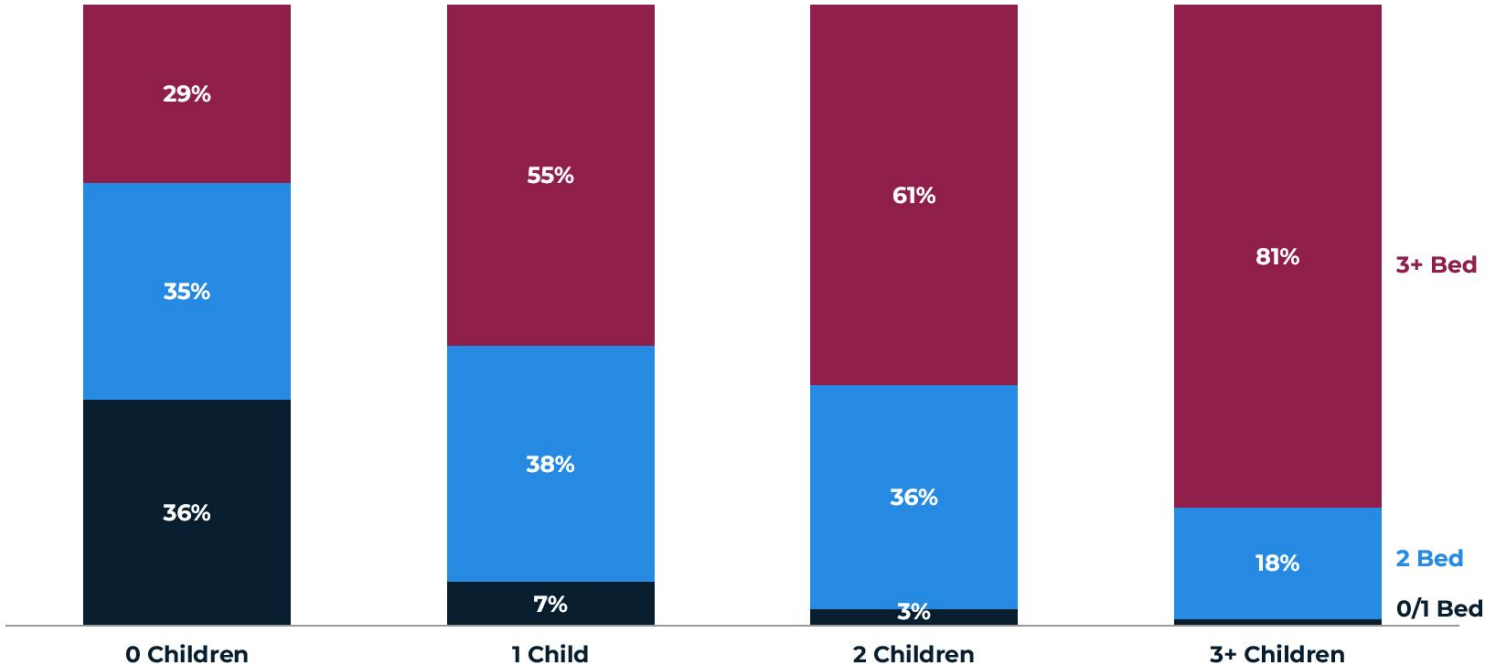
Boston Households by Type & Unit Size, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

81% of households with 3+ children live in 3+ bedroom units, while 61% of 2-child and 55% of 1-child households do

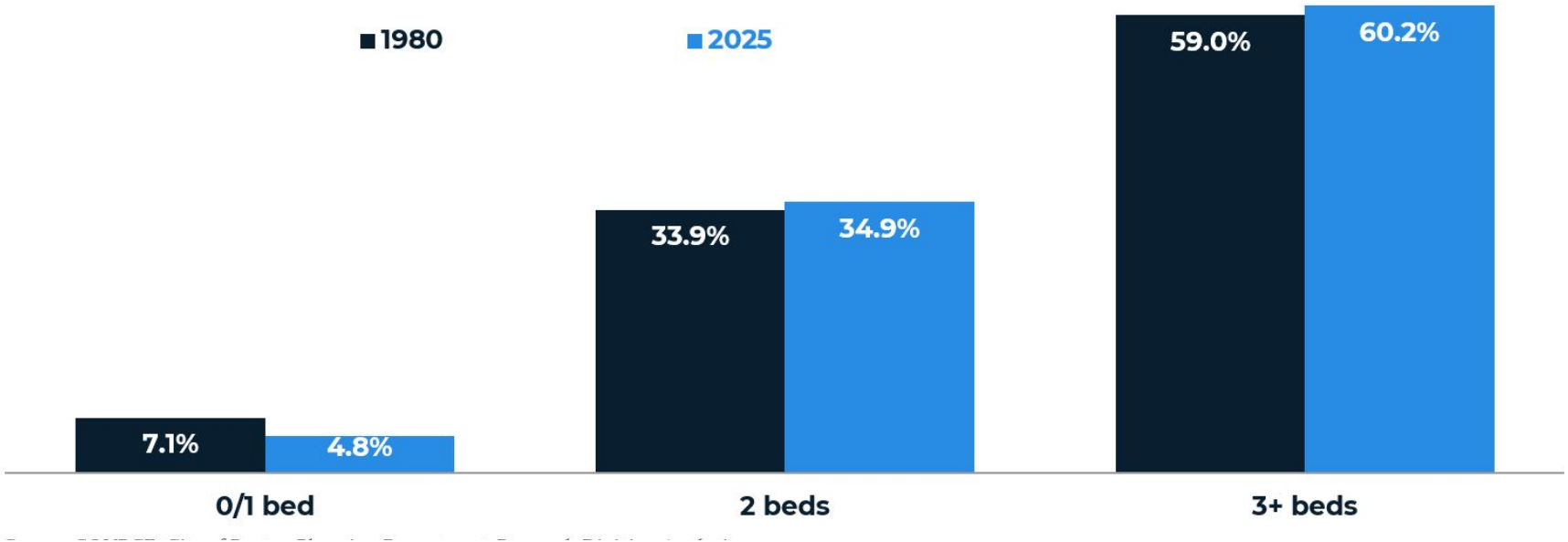
Boston Households by Number of Children and Bedrooms, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Despite shrinking household size, the share of households with children living in 3+ bedroom units has remained stable at ~60% since 1980

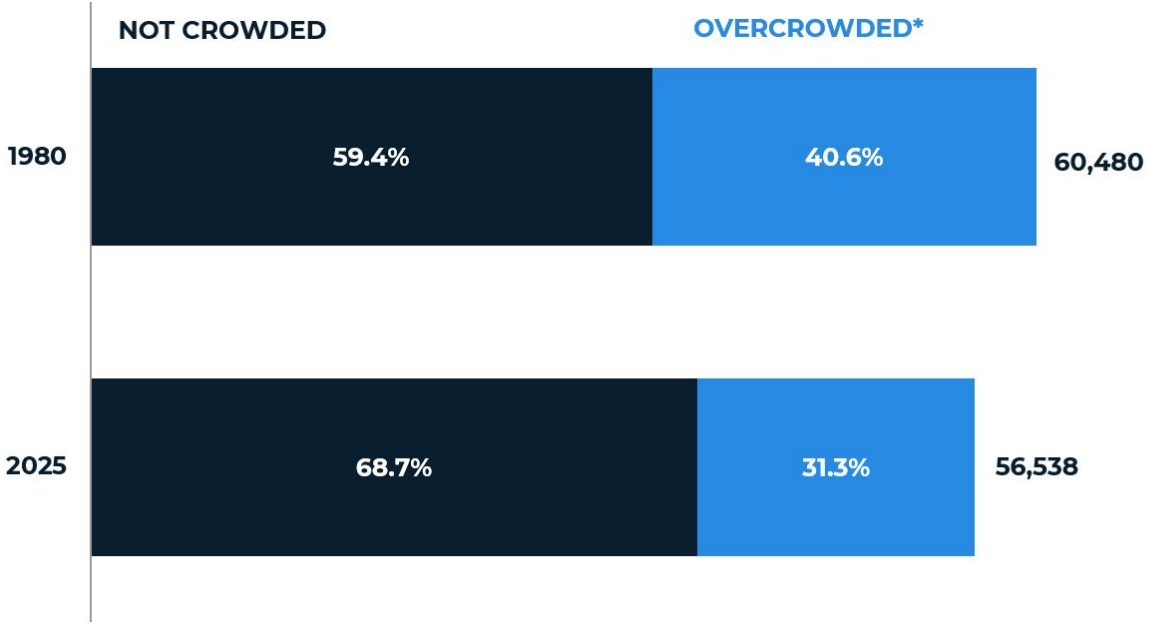
Boston Households with Children by Unit Size, 1980 & 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

In 1980, 41% of households with children lived in overcrowded* conditions; by 2025, that share fell to 31% due to smaller household sizes

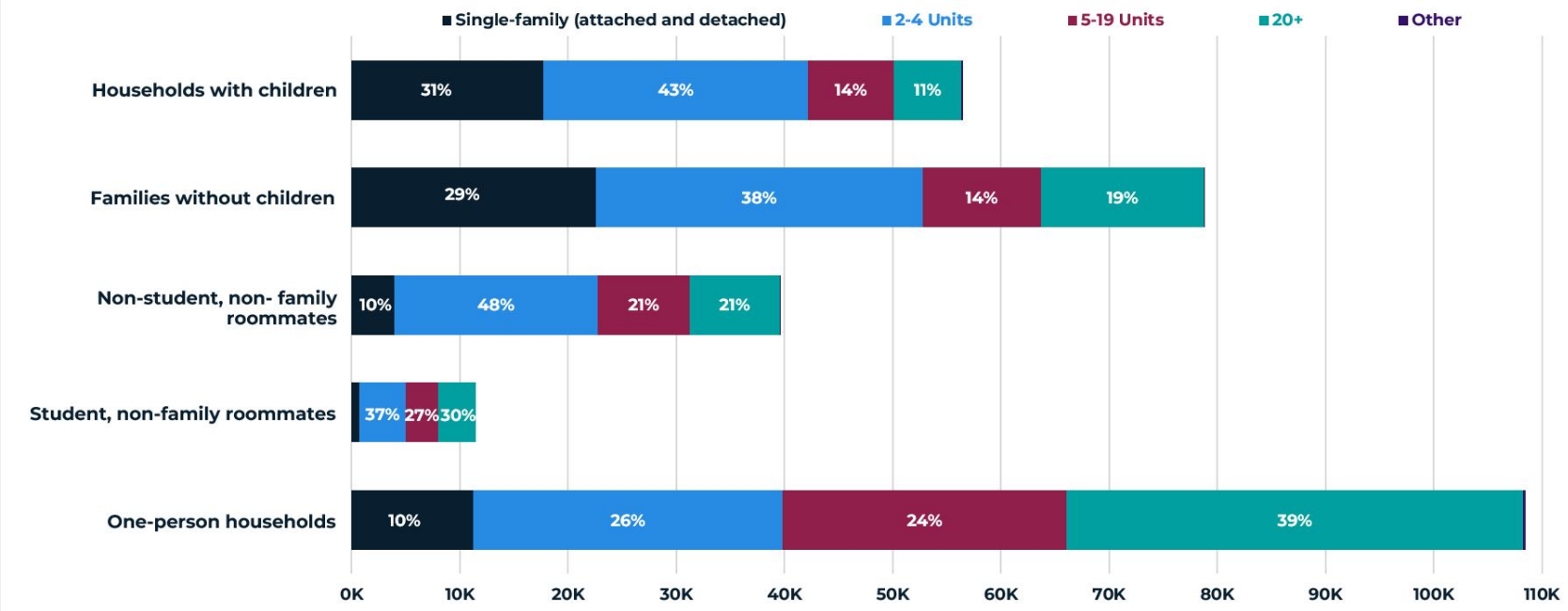
Boston Households with Children by Overcrowding, 1980 & 2025*



*Note: Overcrowded defined as households with at least two more residents than bedrooms in the unit.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980 Decennial Census, IPUMS-NHGIS, University of Minnesota, www.nhgis.org; City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Boston's households with children are most likely to live in 2-4 unit (43%) or single-family buildings (31%)

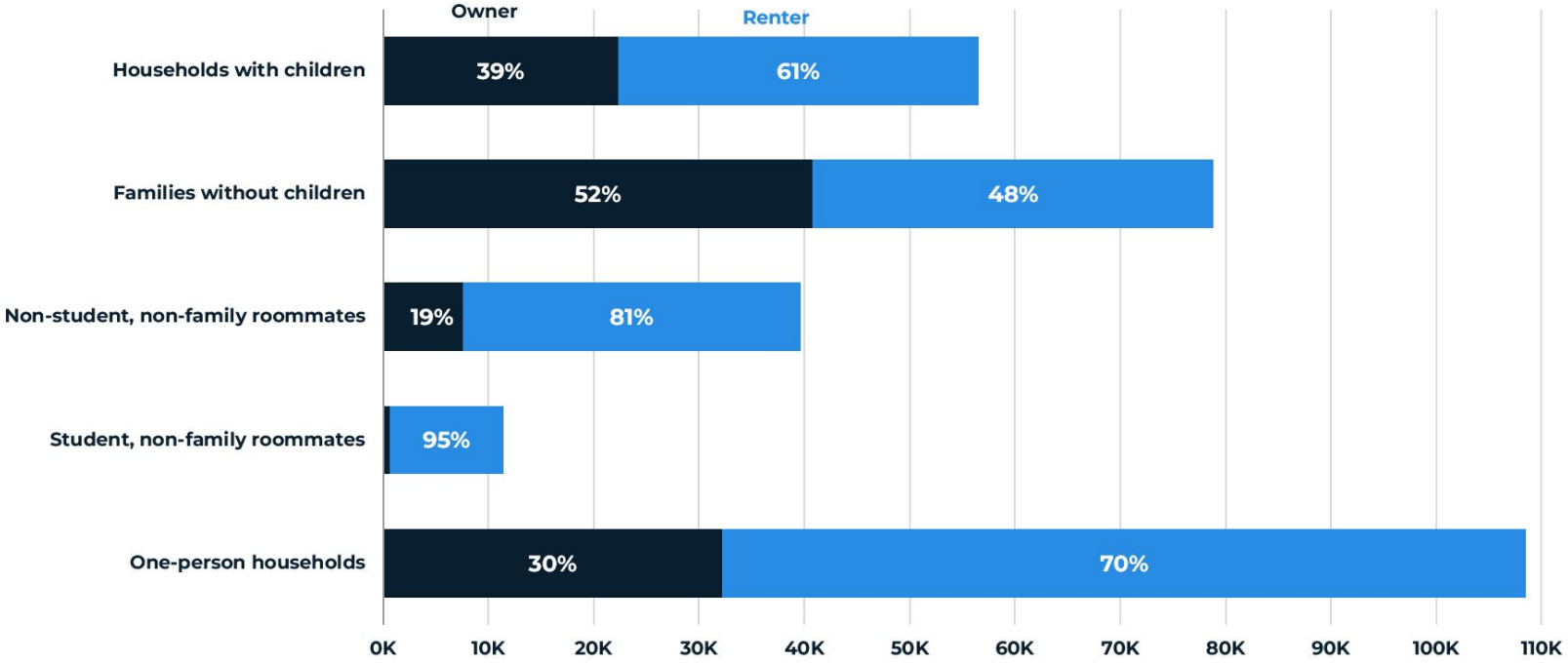
Boston Households by Household Type by Units-in-Building, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Households with children are predominantly renters (61%)

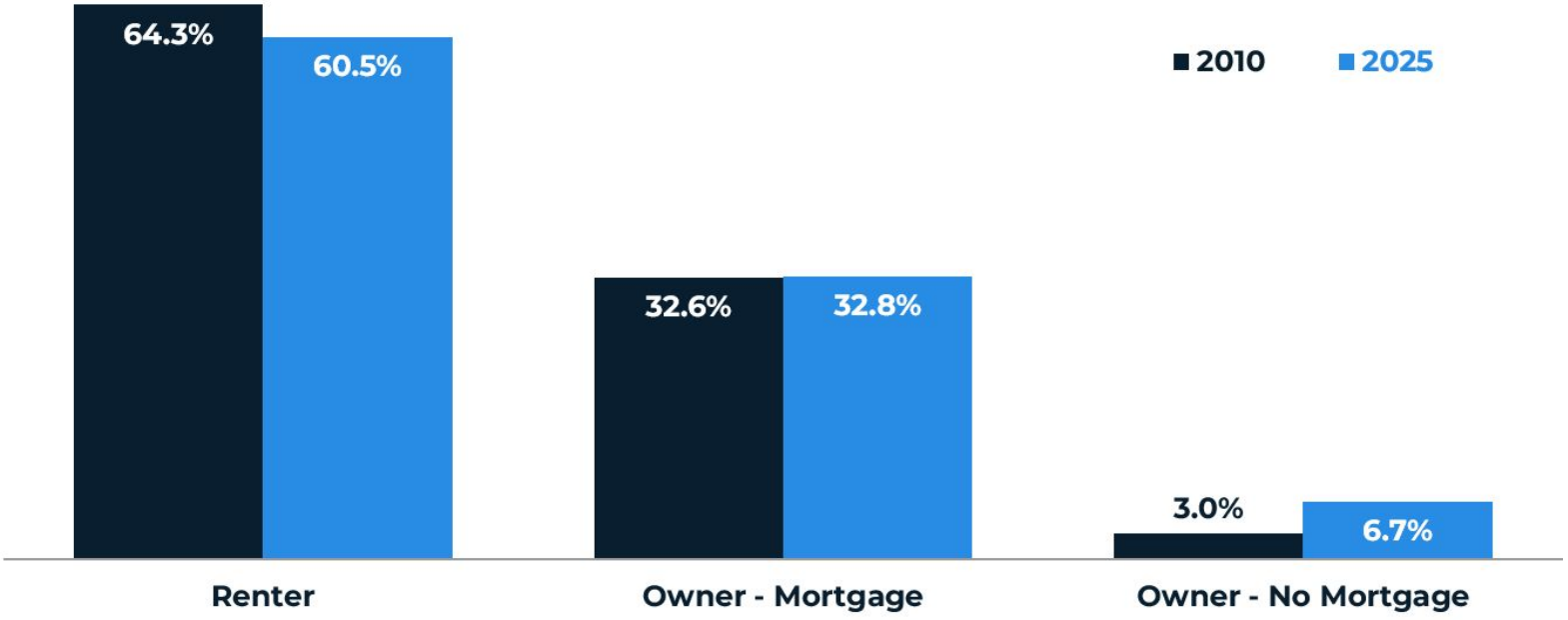
Boston Households by Type & Tenure, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

However, the share of households with children living in ownership housing has increased, especially among those with no mortgage

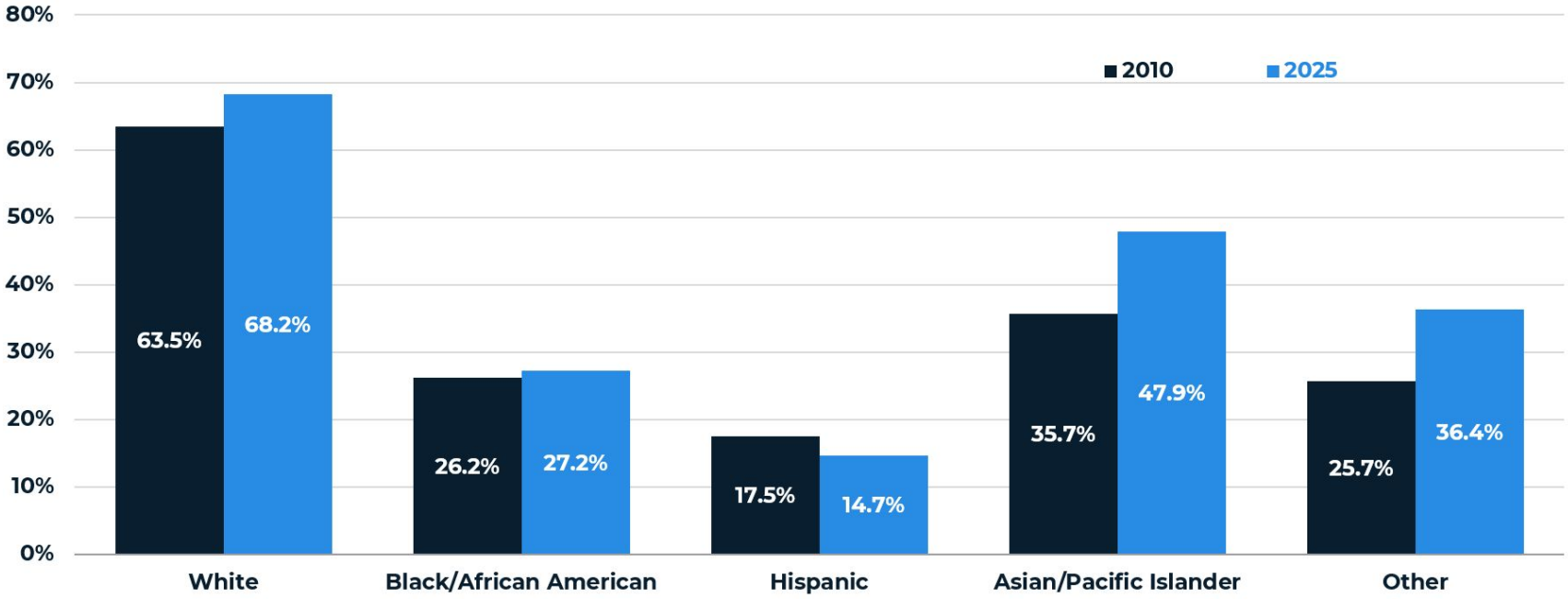
Households with Children by Tenure of Householder, 2010 & 2025



Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Homeownership rates have increased among households with children except for Hispanic householders

Boston Homeownership Share of Households with Children by Race, 2010 & 2025



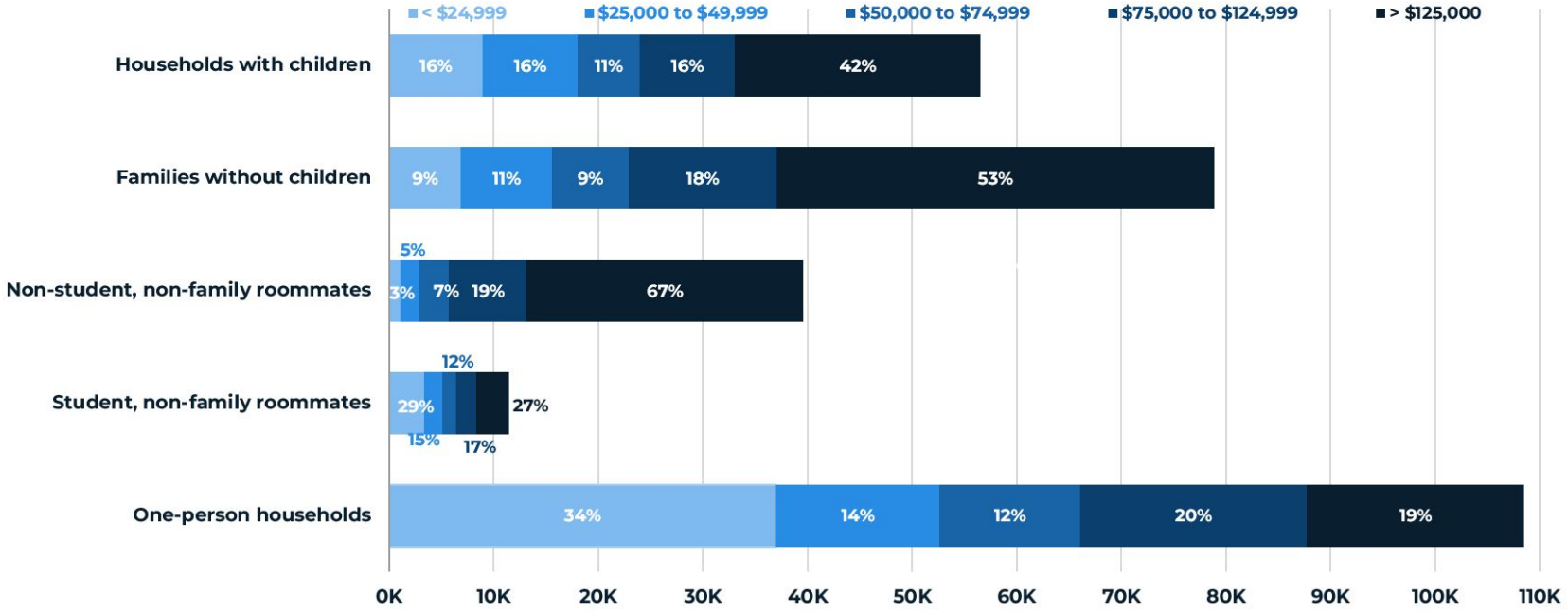
Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

FINANCES OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

What financial and housing cost challenges do households with children face?

42% of households with children make more than $125k annually, with a median household income of $98,183

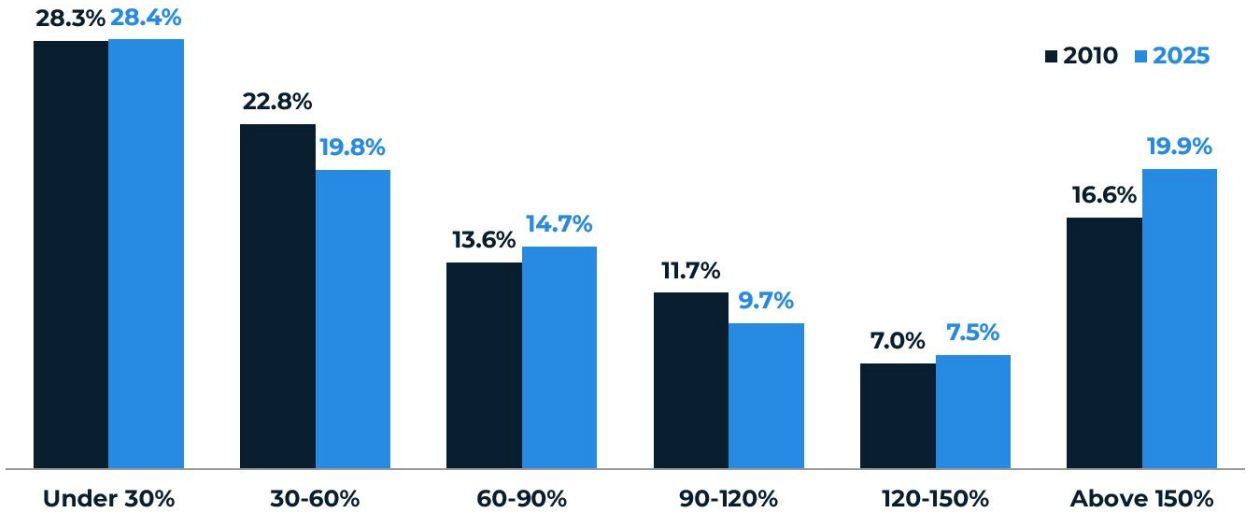
Boston Households by Type and Household Income, 2025



Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

28% of households with children live below 30% of Area Median Income (AMI), a consistent share since 2010

Households with Children by AMI, 2010 & 2025



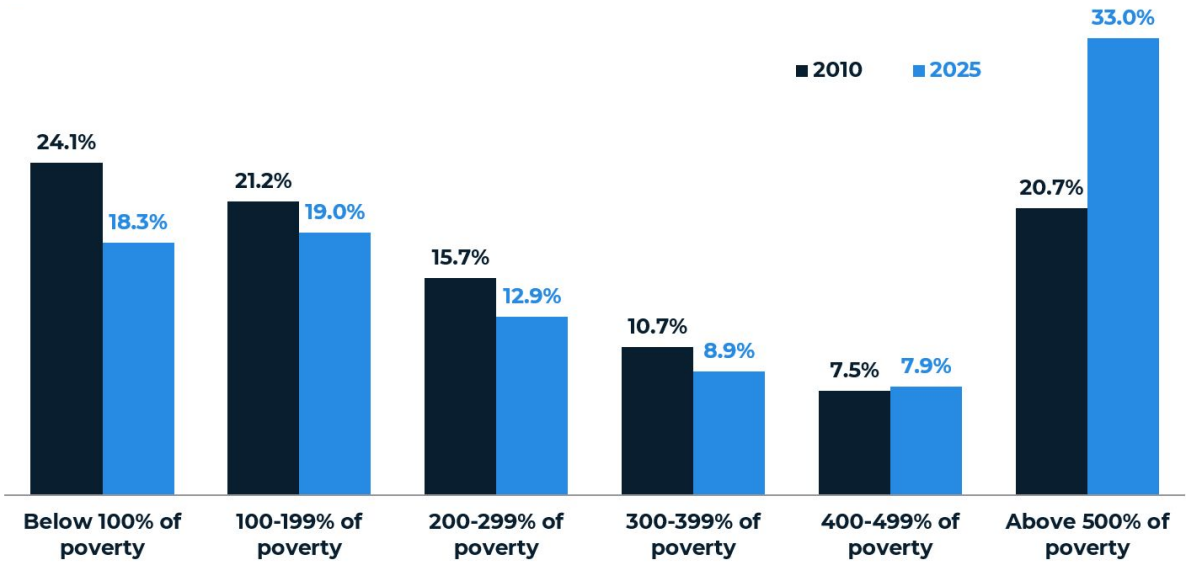
Households in **lower-to-middle** of the income distribution (30%-120%), fell from **48%** in 2010 to **44%** in 2025.

At the same time, the share of households earning **over 120% of AMI** rose from **23.6%** to **27.4%** suggesting Boston has become relatively more attractive to high income households with children compared to the suburbs

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

18% of households with children lived in poverty in 2025, down from 24% in 2010

Households with Children by Poverty Levels, 2010 & 2025



Households in **lower income** distribution, below 400% of poverty, fell from **72%** in 2010 to **59%** in 2025.

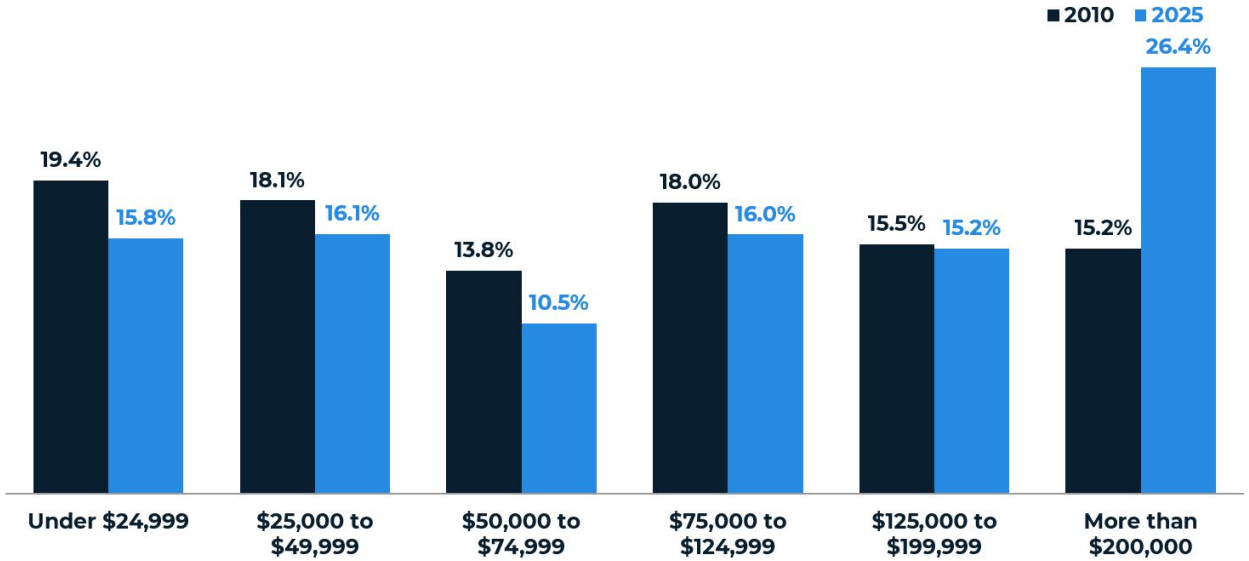
At the same time, the share of households with income above 400% of poverty rose from **28%** to **41%**.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Poverty line for family of four with two children under 18 was $22,113 in 2010 and $32,649 in 2025.

26% of households with children have an income above $200,000 in 2025, up from 15% in 2010 (inflation adjusted)

Households with Children by Household Income (2025 dollars), 2010 & 2025

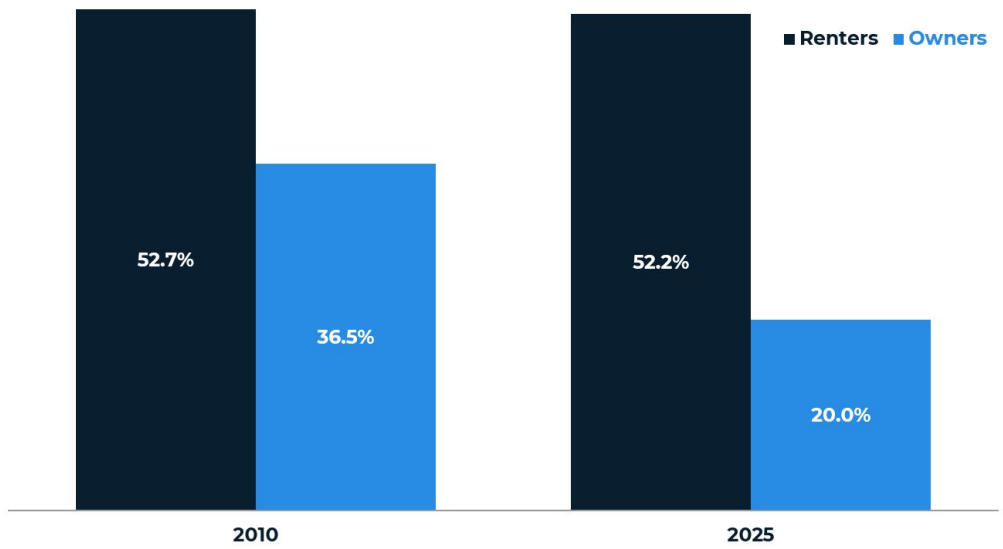


Households in **lower income** distribution, below $200,000 declined from **85%** in 2010 to **74%** in 2025.

Source: 2008-2012 American Community Survey, City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

In 2025, 52% of renter households with children were cost-burdened, while only 20% of owner-occupied households were housing cost-burdened*

Cost-Burdened Households with Children by Tenure, 2025*

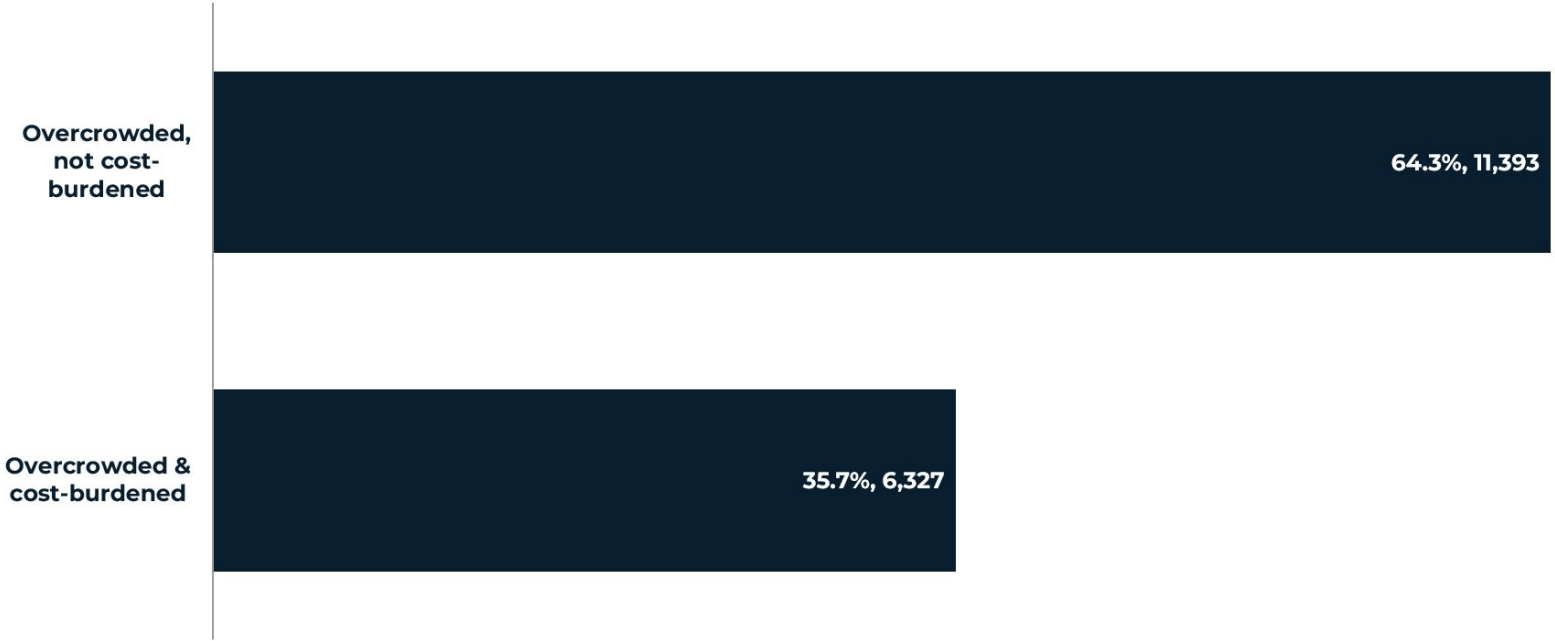


The share of cost-burdened **owner** households was significantly higher at 36.5% in 2010, perhaps due to employment loss during the Great Recession

*Note: Cost-burdened is defined as households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

Of the 17,720 households with children living in overcrowded conditions in 2025, 6,327 (35.7%) were also cost-burdened*

Overcrowded Households with Children by Cost-Burden Status, 2025*



*Note: Cost-burdened is defined as households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.
Source: City of Boston Research Division Population Estimates, 2025, City of Boston Research Division Analysis.

CONCLUSION

Boston's households with children are shrinking in number and size - 55% have only one child - and many are struggling financially despite a recent trend towards higher incomes



MIGRATION & BIRTH RATES

Long-standing pattern of out migration of young children continues, but low birth rates are driving decline in children



HOUSING COST BURDEN

~52% of rental households are cost burdened, similar to 2010



HIGHER INCOME

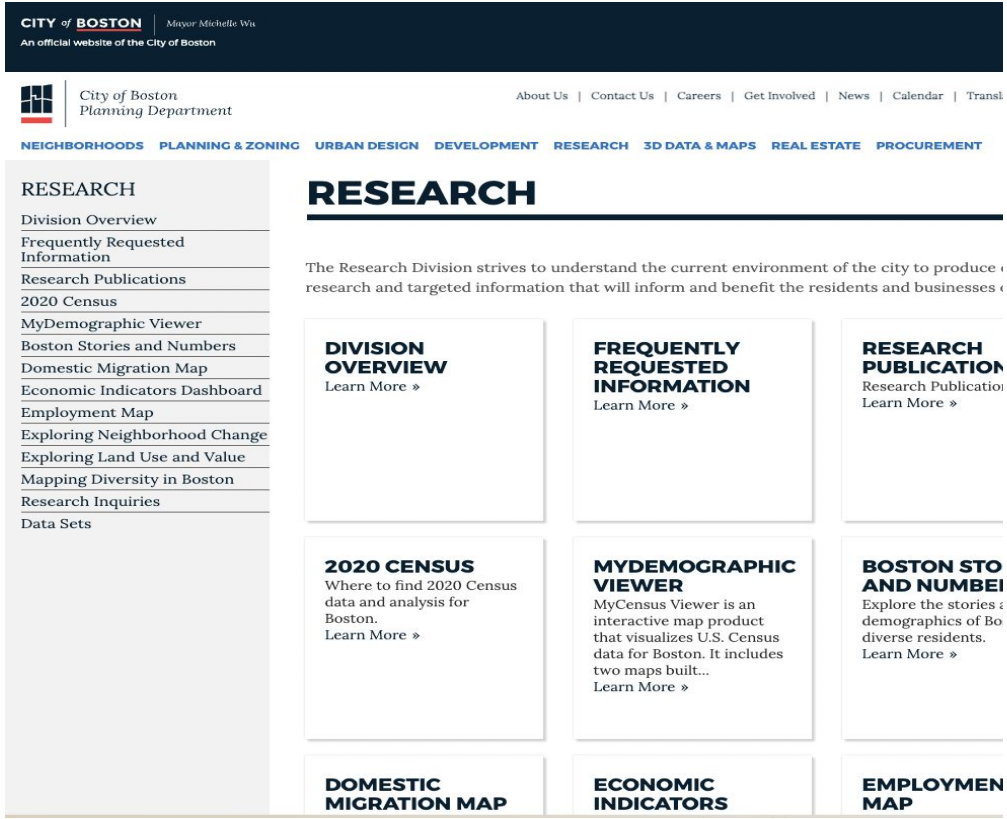
33% of households with children above 500% of poverty

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TOOLS

READ, VISUALIZE, & DOWNLOAD DATA

bostonplans.org/research



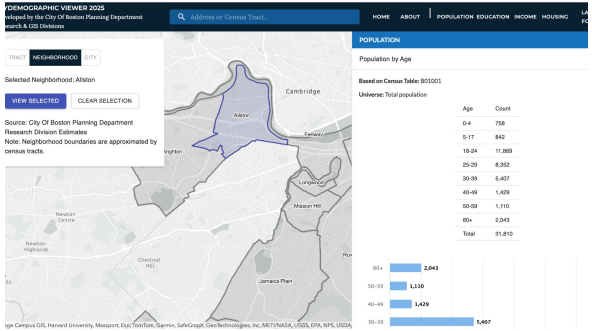
City of Boston Research Division's

PUBLIC RESEARCH TOOLS

TOOLS

To make data easy to access and understand, the Division has created interactive tools:

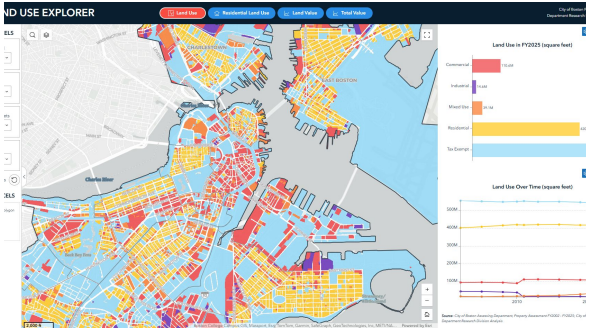
MYDEMOGRAPHIC VIEWER



Tool to interactively view & download the Research Division's 2025 population estimates, with data topics including:

- Population,
- Education,
- Income,
- Housing,
- Labor force

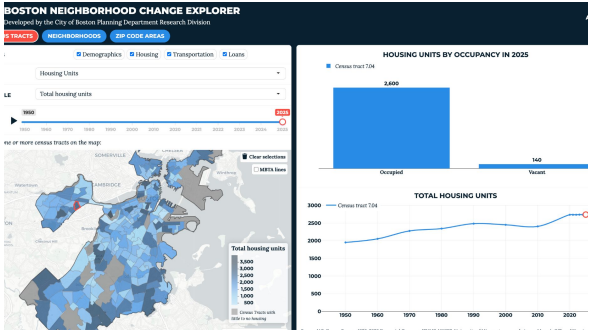
LAND USE & LAND VALUE EXPLORER



Interactive dashboard to view historical and current dynamics of parcel land use and assessed property values in Boston.

- Filter by neighborhood, main street district, or custom area
- View key Land Use, Residential Land Use, Land Value, and Total Land Value variables

NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE EXPLORER



Tool to interactively view, map, & download demographic, housing, transportation, and loan data from 1950 to 2035.

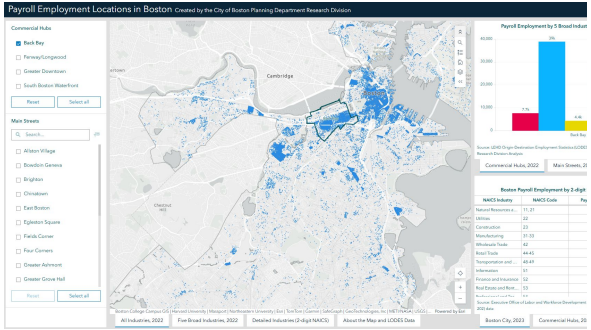
City of Boston Research Division's

PUBLIC RESEARCH TOOLS

TOOLS

To make data easy to access and understand, the Division has created interactive tools:

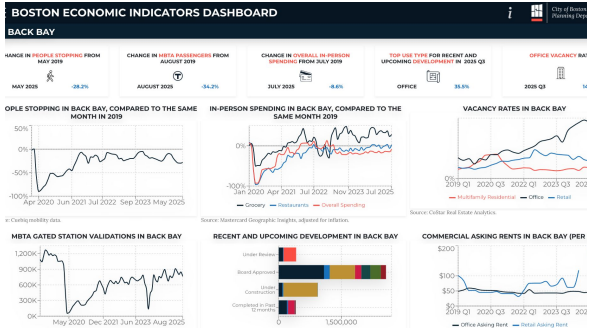
EMPLOYMENT MAPPING TOOL



Tool to interactively view employment in Boston by location and industry

- Filter further by commercial hubor main street district
- View broad and detailed industry breakdown

ECONOMIC INDICATORS DASHBOARD



A monthly-updated dashboard visualizing longitudinal data on:

- Employment,
- Real Estate Market,
- Real Estate Development,
- Inflation,
- Mobility,
- Economic Activity

For Boston citywide and 4 Boston commercial hubs.

BUSINESS PATTERNS TOOL

. . . Coming soon!

. . . Coming soon!

Tool to interactively visualize Boston business establishment data:

- Explore by location or by industry
- View total establishments estimates
- View employment estimates