

ESTIMATING BOSTON'S POPULATION

RESEARCH DIVISION

February 21, 2025



City of Boston
Planning Department

BOSTON'S POPULATION IS HARD TO COUNT

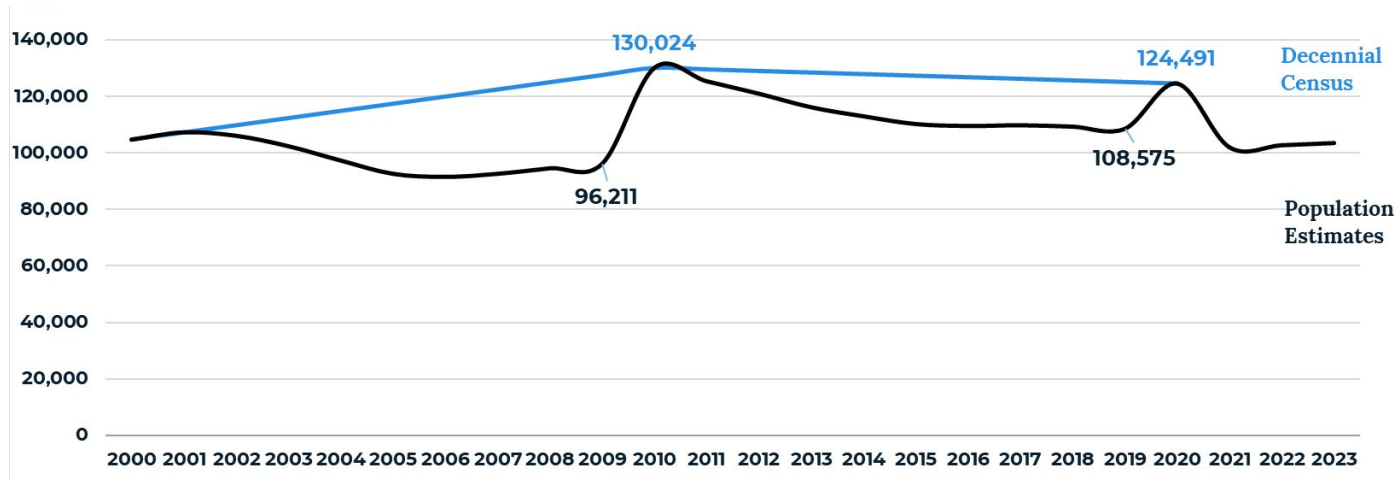
(EVEN WITHOUT A PANDEMIC)



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Planning Department*

ANNUAL POPULATION ESTIMATES UNDERCOUNT SUFFOLK COUNTY 18-24 POPULATION COMPARED TO DECENNIAL CENSUS

2000 to 2020 Census Bureau Population Estimates and 2000 to 2020 Decennial Census



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Censuses and Population Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

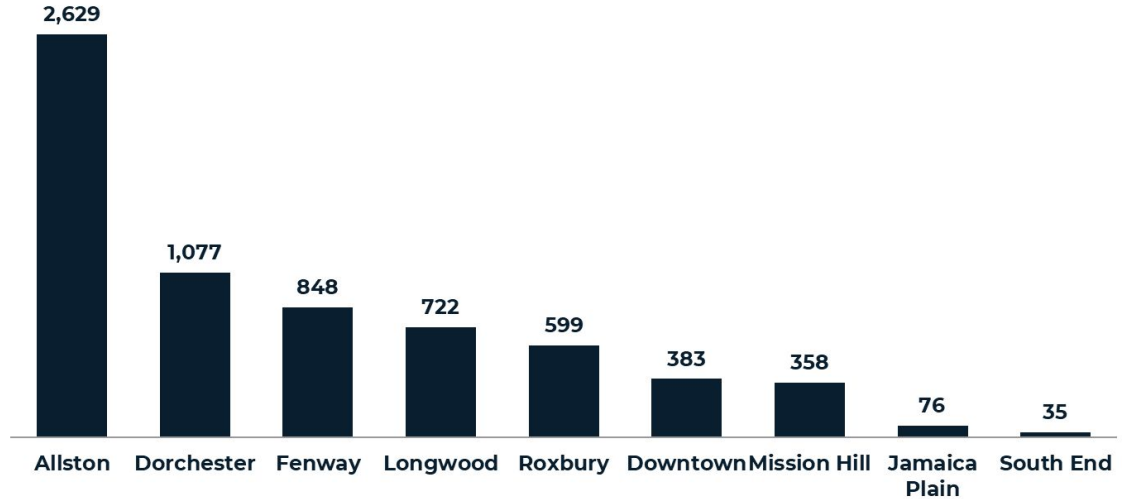
**THE PANDEMIC MADE
BOSTON'S
POPULATION EVEN
HARDER TO COUNT IN
2020**



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PANDEMIC DISRUPTIONS LED TO AN UNDERCOUNT OF THE COLLEGE DORM POPULATION IN BOSTON

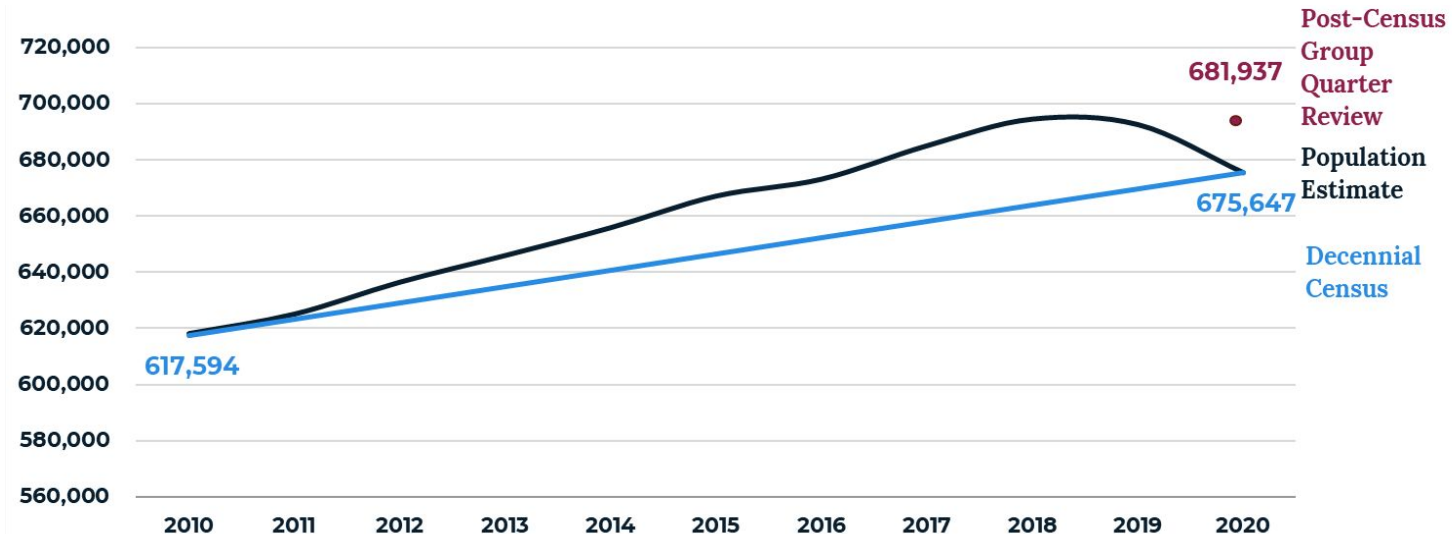
Boston challenged the 2020 Census Group Quarters count using data from colleges and universities and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department to show a net undercount of 6,290 dormitory and correctional facility residents.



Source: Fall 2019 University Accountability Ordinance Data, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

CORRECTING FOR THE GROUP QUARTERS UNDERCOUNT WOULD BRING BOSTON'S 2020 POPULATION BASE TO 681,937

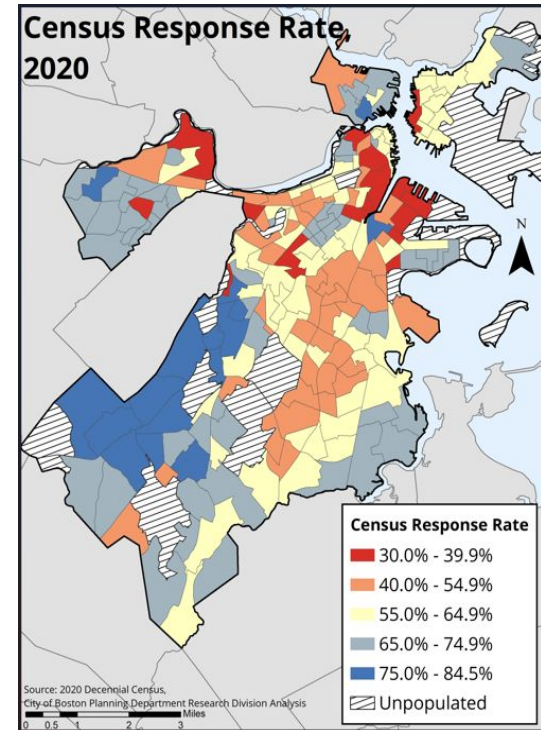
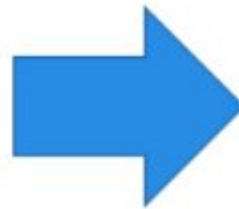
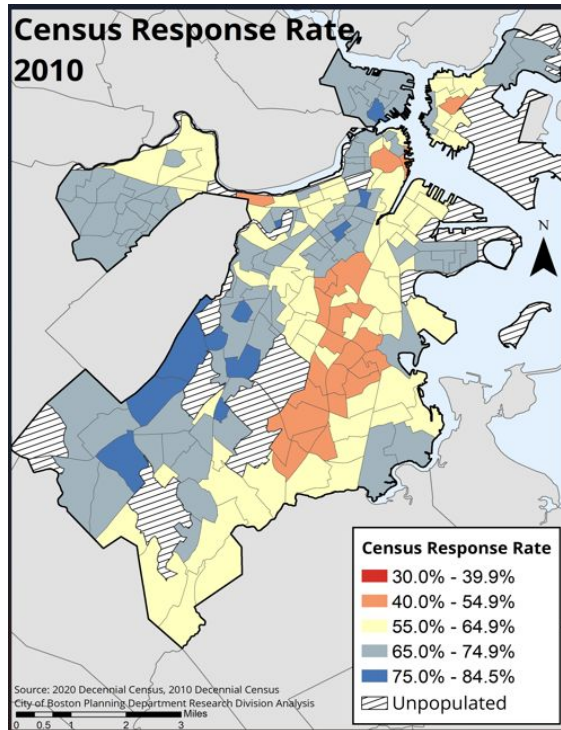
Group Quarter Adjustment add to Boston's 2020 Population Base



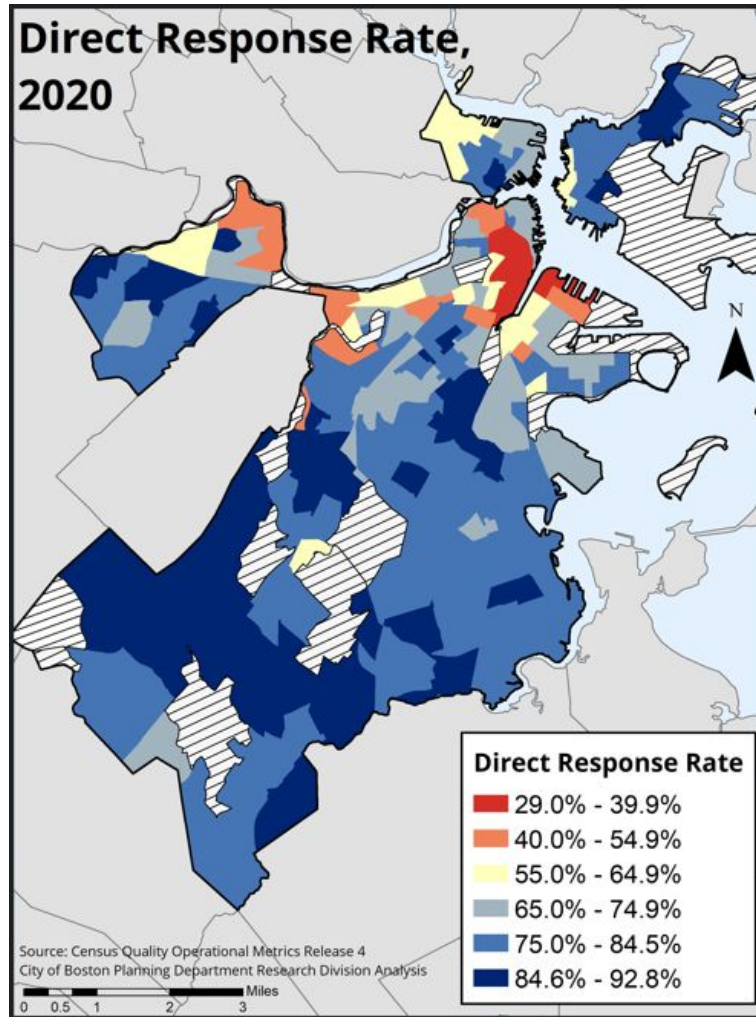
Source: 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census & Vintage 2019 Population Estimates 2020 , City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

LOWER 2020 CENSUS HOUSEHOLD SELF-RESPONSE RATES RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT UNDERCOUNT OF THE HOUSEHOLD POPULATION IN BOSTON AS WELL

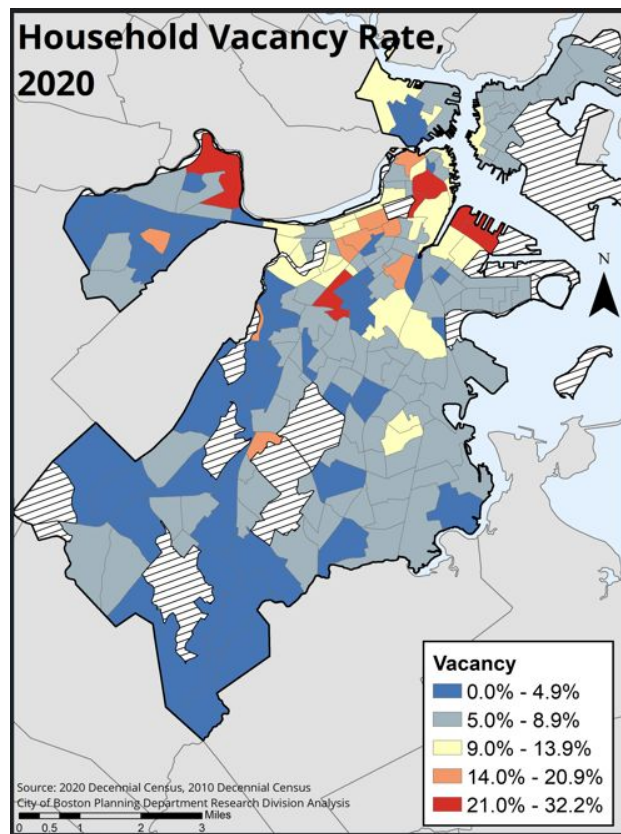
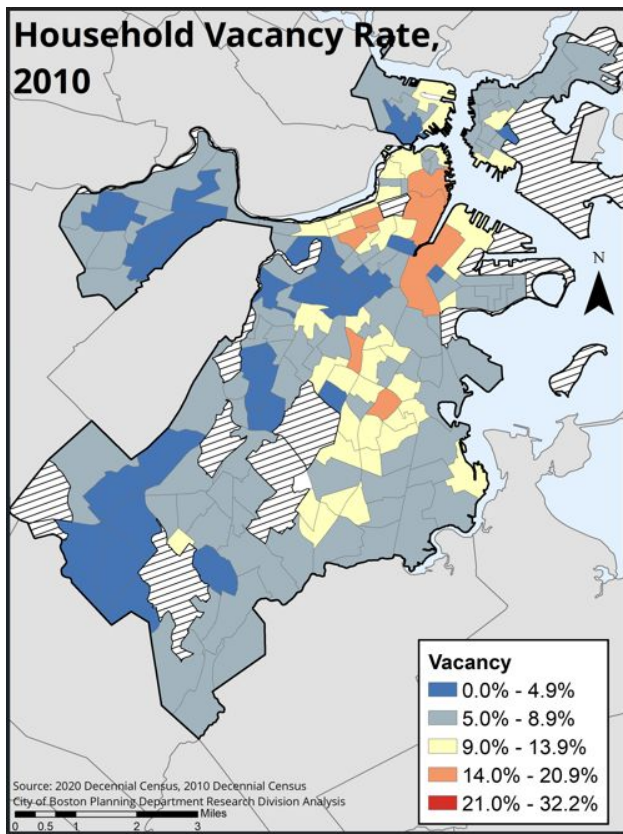
Some tracts had self-response rates below 40% of households



**EVEN AFTER
NON-RESPONSE FOLLOW
UP OPERATIONS IN 2020,
SOME CENSUS TRACTS IN
ALLSTON, DOWNTOWN,
AND SOUTH BOSTON
WATERFRONT HAD
DIRECT HOUSEHOLD
RESPONSES FROM LESS
THAN HALF OF UNITS**

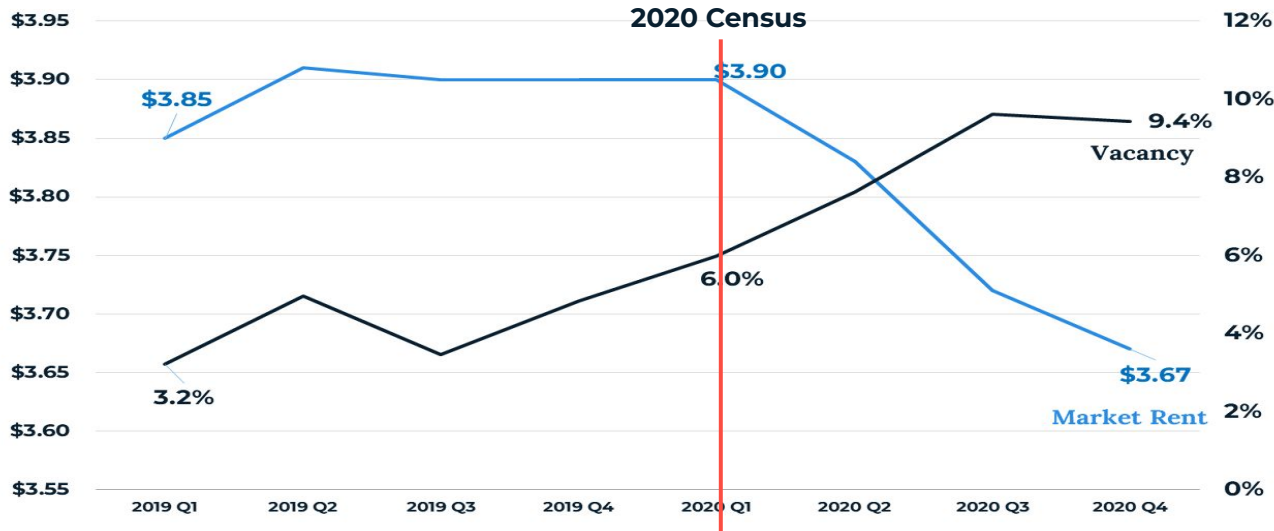


THE 2020 CENSUS ASSIGNED HIGH VACANCY RATES TO TRACTS WITH LOW RESPONSE RATES



COSTAR DATA SHOW LOW VACANCY RATES IN BOSTON AT THE TIME OF THE 2020 CENSUS

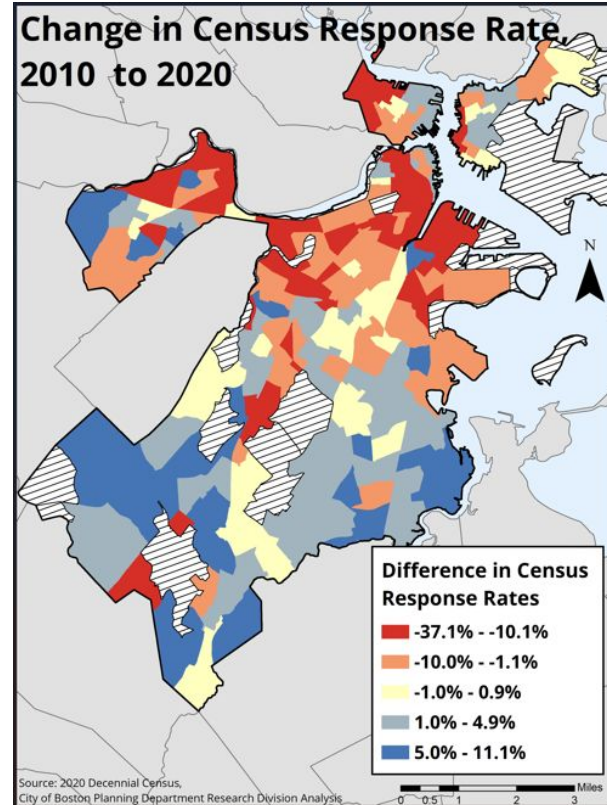
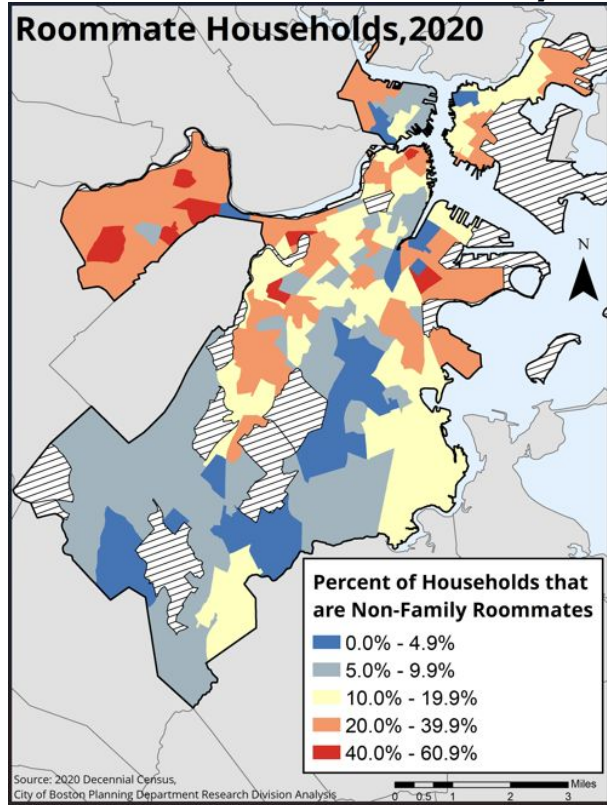
Market Asking Price (per square foot) and Vacancy Rate



- Q1 2020 multi-family vacancy rate for Boston was 6.0%
- Vacancies rose through Q3 2020 and then began to fall

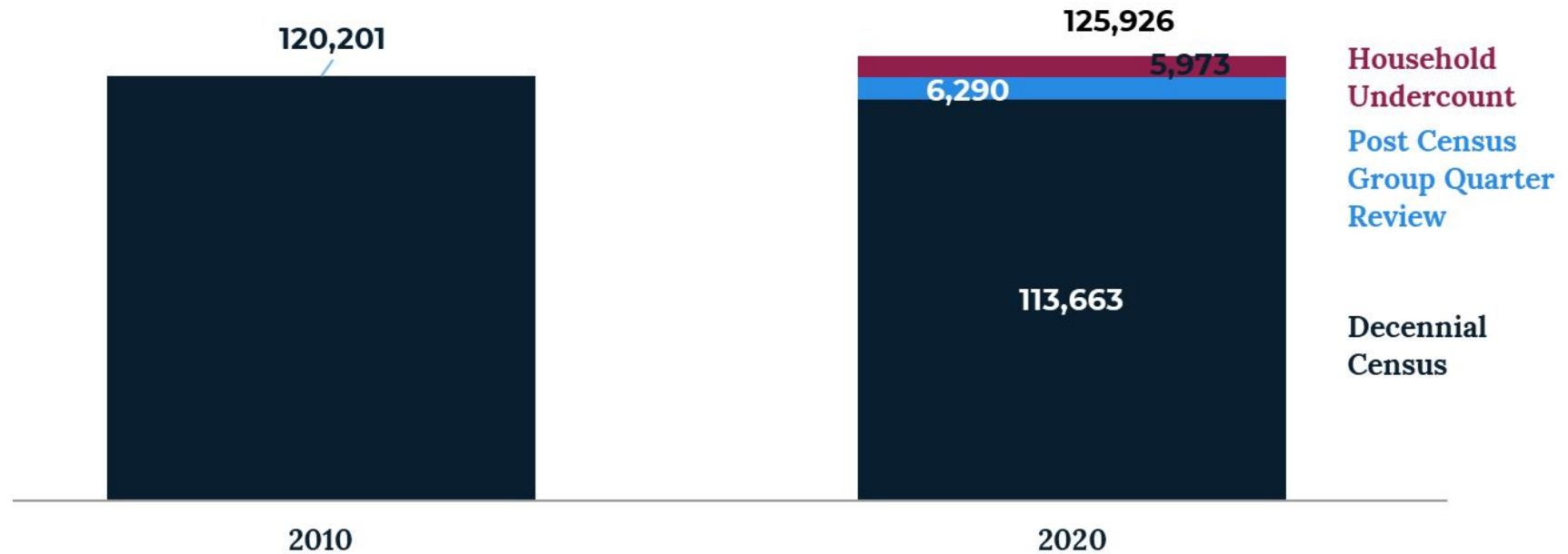
Source: CoStar, buildings with 5+ units, nominal dollars

WHO MAY HAVE BEEN MISSED? THE 2020 CENSUS HAD LOWER SELF-RESPONSE RATES IN AREAS WITH HIGH SHARES OF ROOMMATE HOUSEHOLDS, COMMON WITH YOUNG ADULTS



THE RESEARCH DIVISION ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 6,000 YOUNG ADULTS LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WERE MISSED BY THE 2020 CENSUS

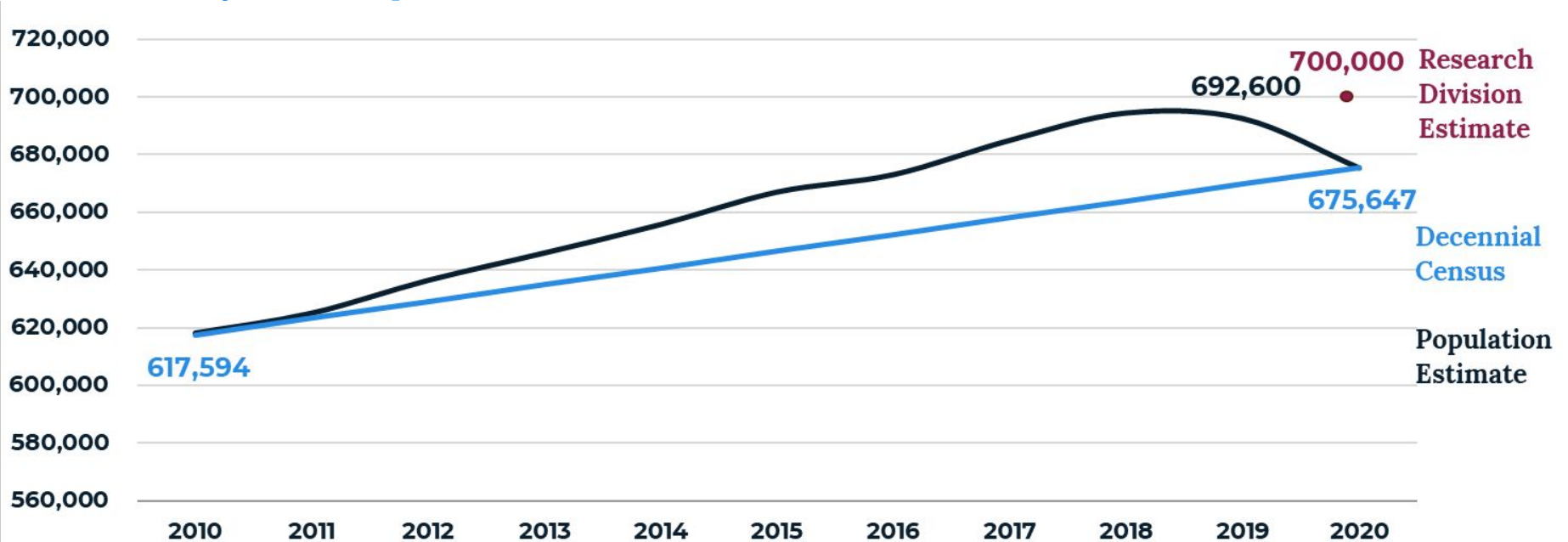
Boston 18-to-24 Population 2010 & 2020



Source: 2010 Decennial Census & 2020, Planning Department Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

ADJUSTING FOR UNDERCOUNT OF THE HOUSEHOLD POPULATION BRINGS BOSTON'S POPULATION IN 2020 TO ALMOST 700,000

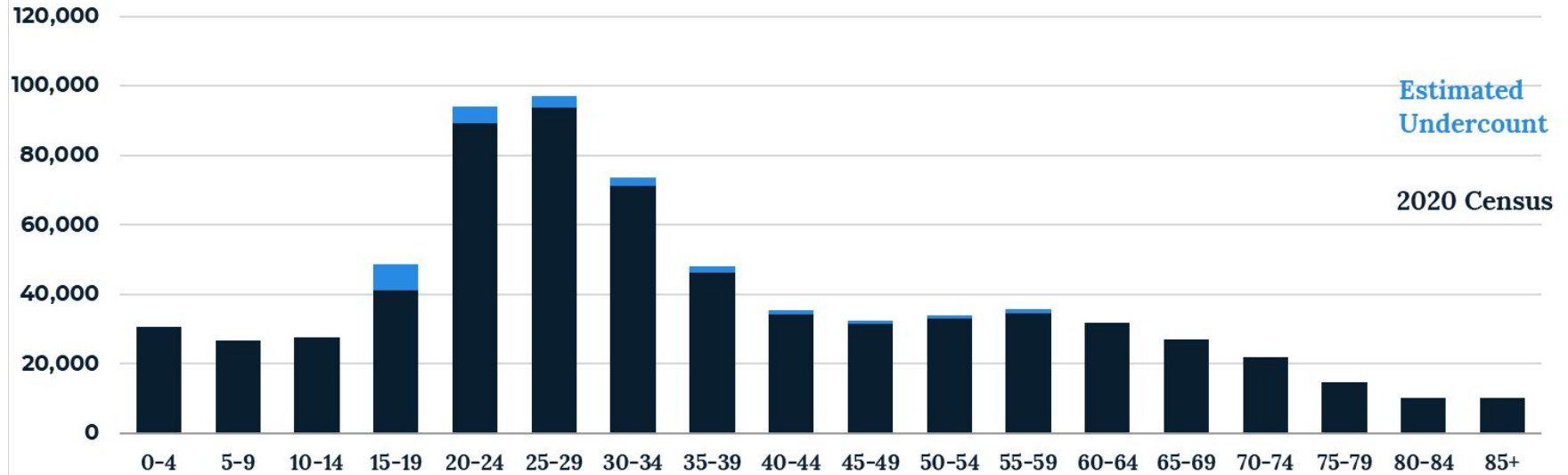
Estimates of Boston's Population 2010-2020



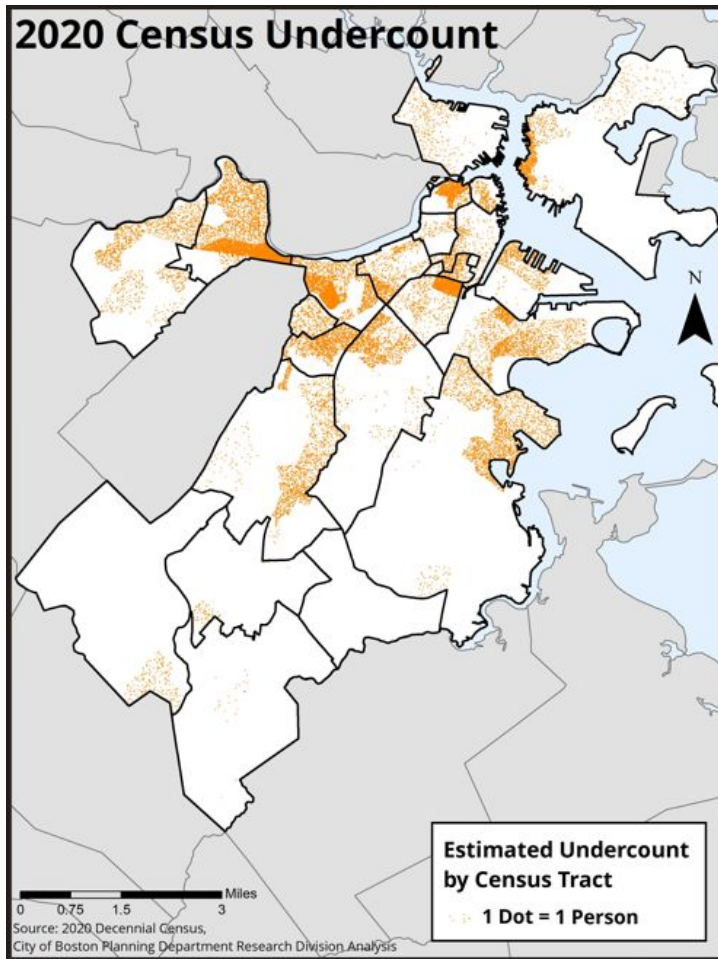
Source: Census Bureau and 2020 Planning Department Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

THE RESEARCH DIVISION CREATED A 2020 BASE THAT INCORPORATES UNDERCOUNTED POPULATIONS

2020 Revised Population



Source: Census Bureau and 2020, Planning Department Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis



THE UNDERCOUNT WAS NOT DISTRIBUTED EQUALLY IN NEIGHBORHOODS

These additional **25,000** residents are more likely to live in neighborhoods in the northern part of the city.

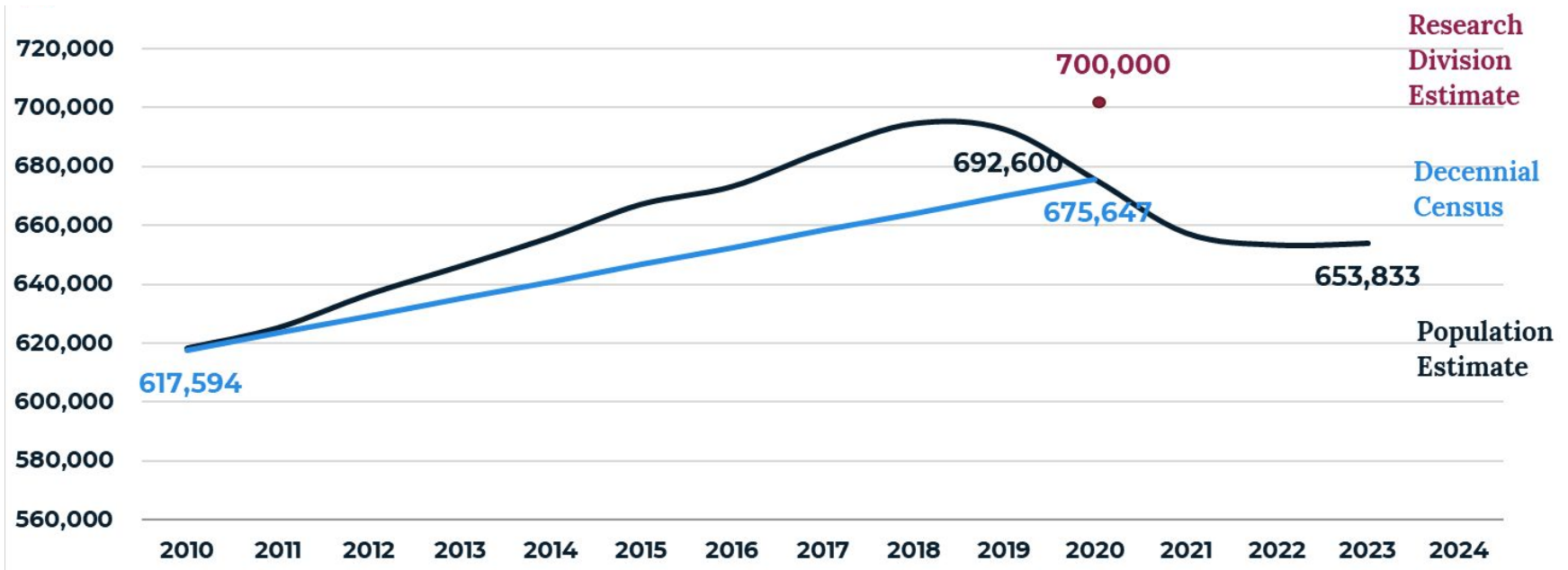
WHAT HAPPENED TO BOSTON'S POPULATION **AFTER** **2020** ?



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THE 2021-2023 CENSUS POPULATION ESTIMATES SUGGEST THAT BOSTON'S POPULATION HAS FALLEN SIGNIFICANTLY AND NOT RECOVERED

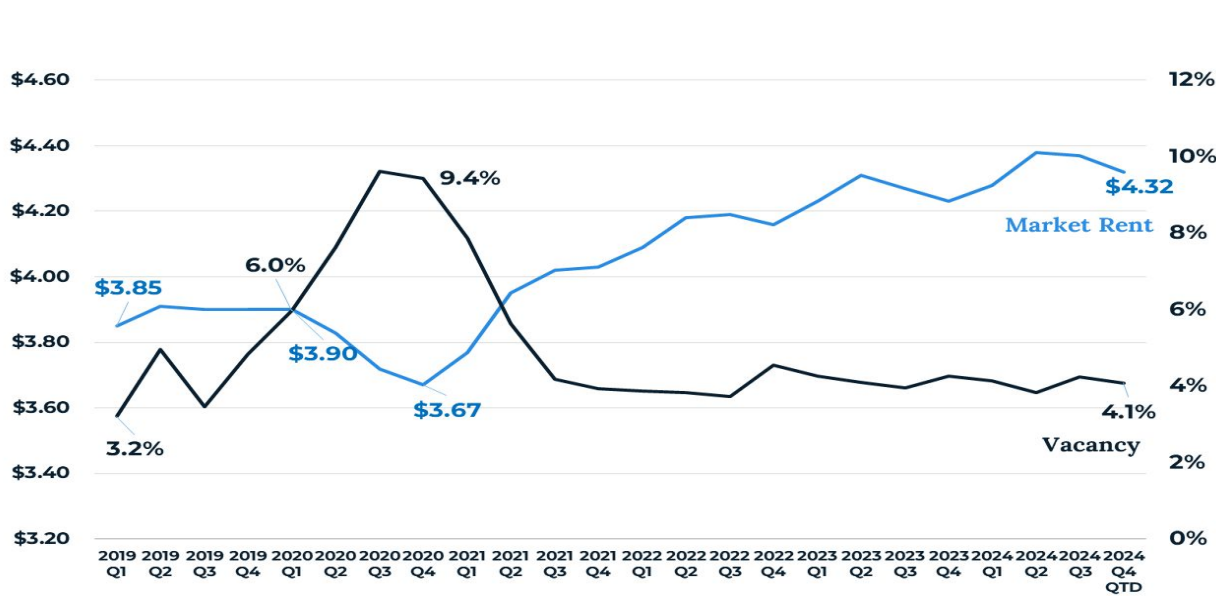
Research Division Boston Population Estimate and Census Data, 2010-2023



Source: 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census & Vintage 2019 & 2023 Population Estimates Vintage 2019 & 2023 Population, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

REAL ESTATE DATA SHOW RECOVERED RESIDENTIAL DEMAND. VACANCY RATES IN 5+ UNIT MULTIFAMILY BUILDINGS RECOVERED PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS BY Q2 2021 AND RENTS HAVE RISEN

Market Asking Price (per square foot) and Vacancy Rate

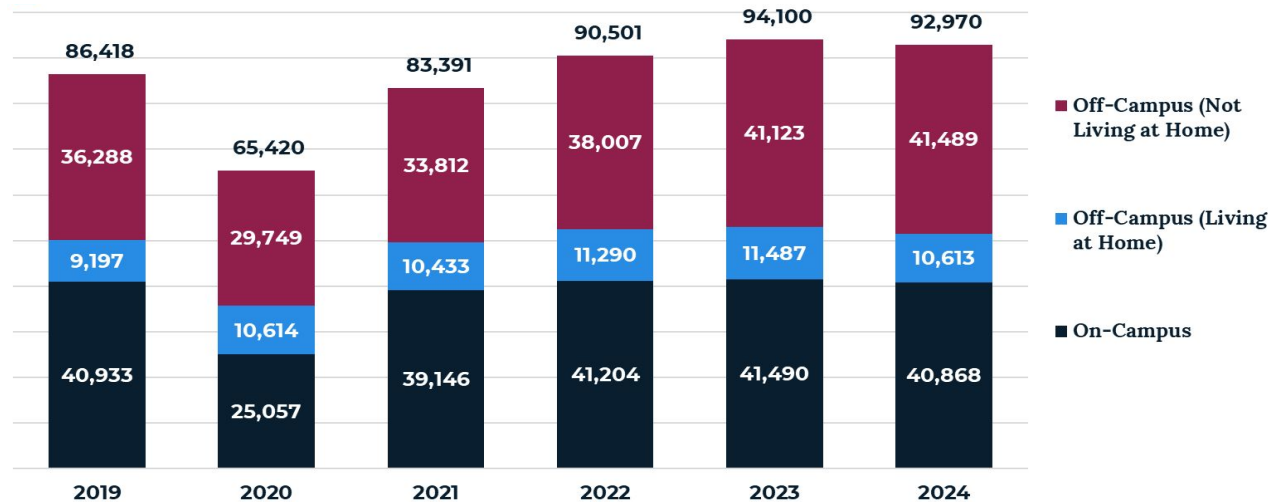


Vacancies are low despite construction of over 14,000 net new housing units since April 1, 2020.

Source: CoStar, buildings with 5+ units, nominal dollars

COLLEGE DATA SHOW A DIP IN STUDENTS LIVING IN BOSTON IN FALL 2020 WHICH LARGELY RECOVERED BY FALL 2021

College Students Living in Boston, Fall 2019 - Fall 2024



Colleges and Universities report fall student enrollment and place of residence to the City

Source: University Accountability Ordinance, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

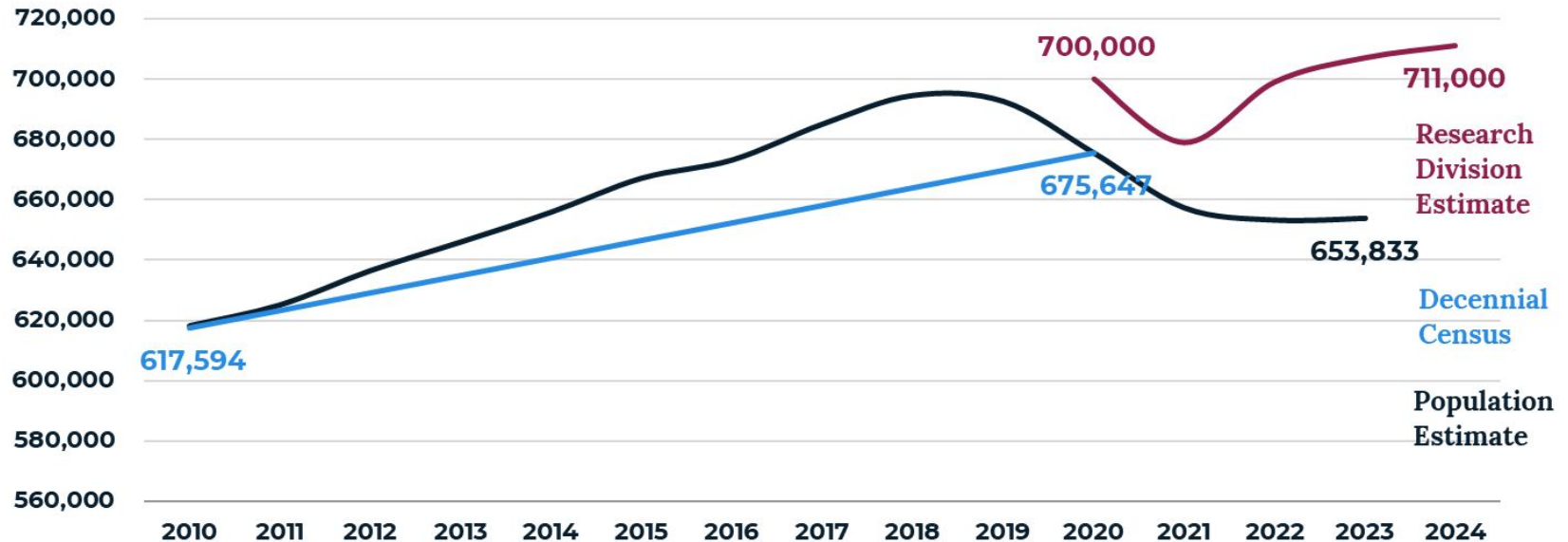
RESEARCH DIVISION
ESTIMATES OF
BOSTON'S POPULATION
RECOVERY AND
GROWTH



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THE 2021-2023 CENSUS POPULATION ESTIMATES SUGGEST THAT BOSTON'S POPULATION HAS FALLEN SIGNIFICANTLY AND NOT RECOVERED BUT OUR ESTIMATES ARE HIGHER

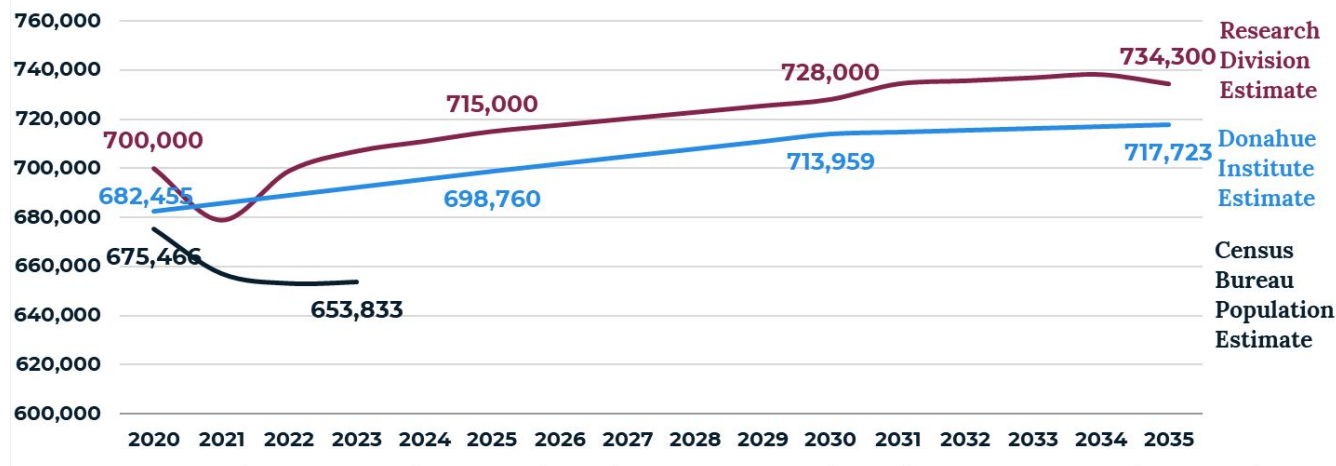
Boston's Population Estimate, 2010-2024



Source: 2010 & 2020 Decennial Census & Vintage 2019 & 2023 Population Estimates Vintage 2019 & 2023 Population, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

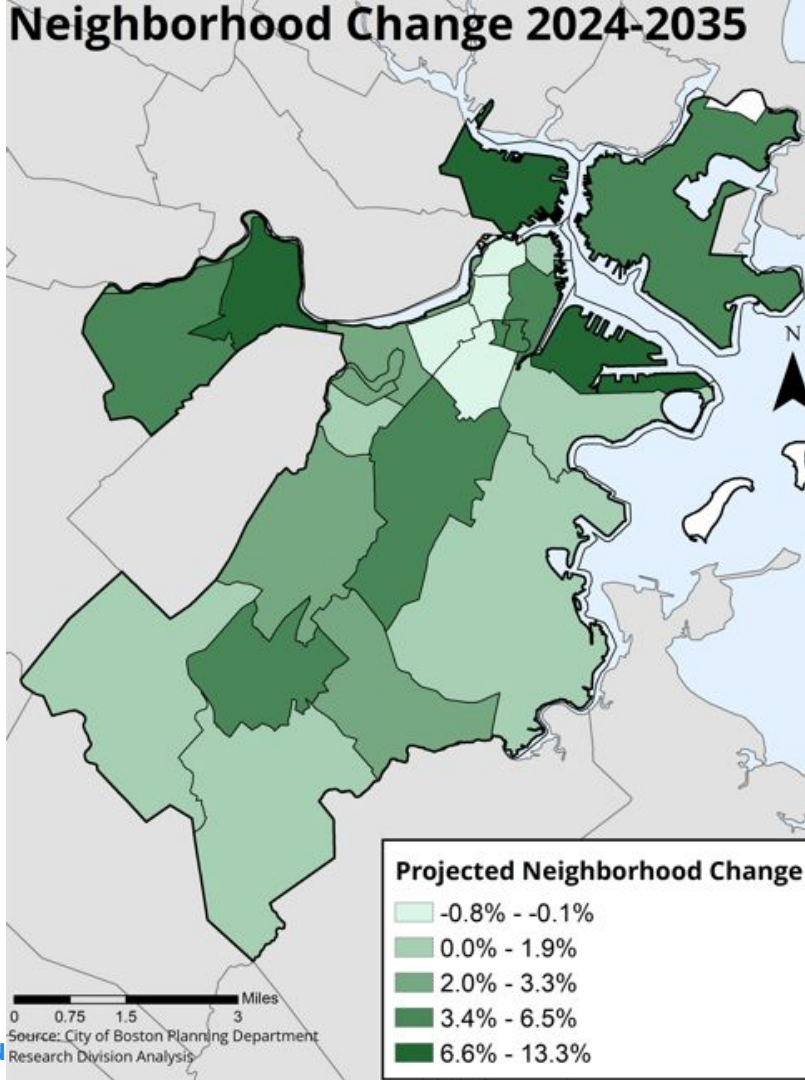
BOSTON RESEARCH DIVISION & UMASS DONAHUE INSTITUTE PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS ARE SIMILAR, WHILE THE CENSUS POPULATION ESTIMATES SHOW A DIFFERENT EARLY TRAJECTORY

Different Estimates and Projections for Boston's Population, 2020-2035



Source: Vintage 2024 Population Estimate, Donahue Institute and Research Division Estimates, City of Boston Planning Department Research Division Analysis

Neighborhood Change 2024-2035



Neighborhoods projected to have the largest percentage increases in population:

- **Charlestown**
- **South Boston**
- **Waterfront**
- **Allston**

MyDemographic Viewer | Bostonplans.org



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MYDEMOGRAPHIC VIEWER



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MyDemographic Viewer

Welcome to MyDemographic Viewer

The Research Division of the City Of Boston Planning Department creates annual population estimates for Boston. MyDemographic Viewer is an interactive map that visualizes these estimates for Boston.

2024 RESEARCH DIVISION ESTIMATE MAP

The City of Boston Research Division created age-specific population estimates for Boston, its neighborhoods and Census tracts. 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data were used to break down the Research Division population estimates by demographic characteristics.

[CLICK TO VIEW](#)

[Exploring Neighborhood Change | Bostonplans.org](https://bostonplans.org)



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EXPLORING NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

The Boston Neighborhood Change Explorer is a tool for people to visualize some of the ways that Boston and its neighborhoods have changed from 1950 to the present. Users can create custom geographic areas of interest based on census tracts or neighborhoods and move through time using interactive controls in order to explore topics like total population, age distribution, race & ethnicity, nativity, housing occupancy & tenure, educational attainment, and labor force participation.

[View the tool](#)

