

Impact Essex County

An Overview of Key Trends

May 2023

Prepared for:
Essex County Community Foundation

Prepared by:
Erika Rosenberg
Project Director



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	2
Demographics.....	3
Children and Youth.....	4
Community Life.....	5
Economy and Workforce.....	6
Education.....	8
Financial Self-Sufficiency	10
Health	12
Racial Equity	13

Introduction

Impact Essex County is an initiative of [Essex County Community Foundation](#) (ECCF) that uses Community Indicators as measurements of social, environmental and economic factors that affect a community's quality of life. The [Impact Essex County](#) website is aimed at creating a holistic picture of Essex County to deepen knowledge and understanding of our community and its local areas.

The data and analysis of 100 indicators on this website serves as a common source of information on critical topics that affect progress in Essex County. The metrics tracked will inform not only ECCF but also all community stakeholders to facilitate collaboration within Essex County and monitor the impact of collective efforts.

Impact Essex County was developed with assistance from the [Center for Governmental Research](#) (CGR), based in Rochester, New York. CGR is a nonprofit research and consulting firm that has been delivering expert support to the public, nonprofit and private sectors for over a century. CGR has developed community indicator projects across New York, Tennessee, Florida and Delaware.

This project includes data for local areas within Essex County and for three comparison counties wherever available. The comparison counties are Middlesex County, MA, Westchester County, NY and Lake County, IL. These counties are similar to Essex County in key areas, including being part of a larger metropolitan region, having both wealthy areas and pockets of poverty, and sharing some demographic characteristics, such as a highly educated population.

These points of comparison provide context and a reference point for looking at and interpreting Essex County's data. As much as the areas are alike, they also have different factors and characteristics impacting them. Our intention is not to rank the areas or put them in competition with one another, but to provide a frame of reference for making meaning out of Essex County's data.

Overview

Coming out of the throes of the coronavirus pandemic, perhaps the fastest growing challenge in Essex County is rising costs. Inflation has pushed the estimated income needed to support a single-parent family with two children to \$120,800 a year (up from \$85,000 2 years ago). The median value of a home in the county rose from \$409,000 in 2012-16 to almost \$463,000.

The refreshed data also points to potential concerns within the educational sector, including higher rates of school absence, lower enrollment in prekindergarten programs, and lower test performance on some assessments, particularly among students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged.

While much of Essex County continues to thrive, poverty, low student achievement and unequal access to resources including jobs and transportation continue to disproportionately impact people of color and geographic areas such as the Cities of Lynn and Lawrence. In Lynn, for example, the rate of elevated lead levels in children is 5.6%, double the countywide rate of 2.7%. In Lawrence, a quarter of households don't have a vehicle enabling access to jobs, education and health care, compared to 10% of county residents.

Historic and current policies, practices and systems have directly harmed and limited opportunities for people of color. These include housing policies that restrict access, employment discrimination, unequal access to financial services and capital, education systems that fail to equitably educate all students, racism in health care delivery, and racial profiling and inequitable sentencing in policing and criminal justice. Inequities have compounded over generations, impacting decades of family members.

In our county of more than 807,000 people, many are impacted. While Essex County is 75% white, our population includes about 36,000 African Americans (4.4%), 27,600 Asians (3.4%), 52,900 people (6.6%) who identify as being of two or more races and nearly 79,000 (9.8%) who checked "some other race." In addition, people of Hispanic heritage (which is considered by the U.S. Census to be an ethnicity, rather than a race) make up 22% of our residents, or 178,000 people.

When we see children of color passing reading assessments at rates about 10 points below that of white children, median household incomes for people of color that are about two-thirds the level for whites, and homeownership rates that lag whites by almost 50%, we know that structural racism is at work.

It is important to also take note of Essex County's many incredible assets, including its proximity to the ocean, significant open space (24% of all land in the county is

protected), and rich historic and artistic institutions and communities. Job growth in the County exceeds the national level, high-paying sectors like Financial Activities are growing, and average salaries are high. Lynn and Lawrence have historically been magnets for immigrants and today boast some of the county's most diverse neighborhoods.

Below, please find summaries of trends across topics ranging from Demographics to Economy and Workforce to Education to Health.

Demographics

Essex County is home to 807,000 residents, with [small but fast-growing minority groups](#), a high proportion of [foreign-born residents](#) in some local areas, and an overall [aging population](#). Demographic trends are important to understand because they impact the economy, health care needs and outcomes, what services government and nonprofits provide, and many other local and national concerns.

Essex County is composed of 34 cities and towns, including the cities of Lynn, Lawrence, Amesbury, Beverly, Gloucester, Haverhill, Methuen, Newburyport, Peabody and Salem. Lynn, Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, Peabody and Salem are considered Gateway Cities. [Gateway Cities](#) are targeted for increased state investment and have below average incomes and adult education levels and populations between 35,000 and 250,000. Though Lynn, with 100,800 people, and Lawrence, with 88,500, are the largest localities in Essex County, they are not the fastest growing. Lynn's population has grown 13% since 2000 and Lawrence's 23%, outpaced by growth in smaller towns such as Methuen, Salisbury and Georgetown.

Lynn and Lawrence are two centers of diversity and immigration, with [foreign-born residents](#) making up 35% of Lynn's population and 41% of the population of Lawrence. Lawrence is also home to 72,200 of the county's 178,000 Hispanic residents. In 2017-21, 80% of Lawrence residents [speak a language other than English at home](#). Immigration has historically been a key driver of population growth throughout the U.S. and is projected to be increasingly important in the next several decades.

The county's [population overall has grown](#) 12% since 2000, similar to the state but below the national rate of growth (18%). [Growth was fastest among Hispanic residents](#) (123%), African Americans (90%) and Asians (63%), though the county as a whole remained majority white (75%).

Overall, 18% of the county's population was [foreign-born](#) and 28% spoke a foreign language at home – comparable with state and national rates and a bit below rates in some otherwise similar counties.

Among both sexes, older age brackets have grown more than younger ones since 2000, in line with America's overall ["graying" trend](#). Among men, the greatest increases were in the age brackets of 60-84 (62%) and 85 or older (73%), along with a 43% and 31% increase in the population of women in each of these age brackets. There were much smaller increases in the age brackets of 20-39 for men (5%). Both sexes had declines of 3% in the under 20 age bracket.

The age distribution of a population has major implications for what types of services are needed (schools, health care, etc.), and how they are delivered and paid for. It also matters where people live – in Essex County, about 38% of [people 65 or older in the county live alone](#), which can make it difficult to access services or care. In addition, 12% of Essex County's population has some type of [disability](#) (both rates are similar to state and national rates).

Most [households](#) in Essex County are made up of singles living alone (27%) or married couples without children (28%), followed by married couples with children (20%), similar to state and national proportions. Although singles living with children made up just 11% of all households in Essex County, they accounted for 35% of all families with children under 18. That's an increase from 28% in 2000, and rates were especially [high among some groups](#) (Hispanics – 63%, African Americans – 57%, whites – 37%, Asians – 27%). [Female-headed single families](#) made up 77% of the total. Children raised by single parents tend to be poorer and can be at risk for lower educational and life outcomes.

Children and Youth

More children in Essex County are living in poverty, but fewer are [exposed to damaging lead](#) and [teen births](#) have fallen dramatically. The available data paint a mixed picture of how children and youth in the county are faring.

Children are set on a trajectory through life in their earliest years, and even before they are born. A healthy pregnancy has a better chance of resulting in a healthy, full-term baby. In Essex County, most pregnant women begin prenatal care in their first trimester, which is the first step toward good birth outcomes. However, the [rates vary among racial and ethnic groups](#), with 90% of Asian mothers, 86% of white mothers, 79% of Hispanic mothers and 81% of African American mothers beginning care early.

Premature babies are at higher risk for a host of problems and delays. In Essex County in 2021, 10% of [births were preterm](#), equal to state and close to national rates. [Infant mortality](#), the death of babies before age 1, has declined from 4.9 per 1,000 live births in 2003-07 to 4.4 in 2015-19 (rates are five-year averages).

Lead is an especially powerful environmental toxin for babies and young children that can cause permanent damage to cognitive, physical and behavioral abilities. The [rate of elevated lead levels in children](#) has been falling, down 43% from 2010 to 2018, to 2.6 per 1,000 children.

Perhaps the greatest risk factor to children's success is poverty. In 2017-21, 13% of Essex County [children were living at or below the poverty level](#), up from 12% in 2000 but below the national rate of 17%. The cities of Lawrence and Lynn had higher rates, 24% and 19%, and poverty was greater among African American (22%) and Hispanic (23%) children.

As children grow up, some exhibit risky behavior. [Teen births](#) in Essex County have fallen by 77% since 2000 to 8 per 1,000 in 2020. This is somewhat higher than the state rate but below the national rate of 15 per 10,000. [Youth arrests](#), in contrast, have fluctuated up and down over the past decade. In 2021, Essex County recorded 1,750 youth arrests, a rate of 22 per 10,000 youth age 10 to 24, similar to the state rate and above a similar county, Middlesex, MA (11). About 6% of [young people between 16 and 19 are not in school or working](#) – similar to the national rate of 7% the state rate of 5%.

Community Life

Transportation, safety, amenities like the arts and the environment all contribute to the quality of life in Essex County. Available data show a lack of transportation options to be a major challenge, while crime has been declining.

The vast majority of residents of Essex County drive to work, with 80% [driving alone to work](#) and another 10% carpooling. A small, but increasing share of residents use public transportation or bike or walk to work. Slightly over 31,600 households in Essex County, comprising 10% of the county's total, [do not own a car](#). This is a lower rate than the state as a whole (at 12%), but still concerning given challenges with public transportation in the county. More than 1 in 5 households in Lawrence (25%) and Lynn (18%) were without cars.

In 2017-21, 89% of households in Essex County [have access to the Internet](#), similar to the state and nation. However, Internet access was considerably lower within certain communities in the region. In Lawrence, only 77% of residents had Internet access in 2017-21.

The crime rate in Essex County has declined slightly since 2012. In 2021, the rate of reported [crimes against people](#) was 9.0 per 1,000 residents, lower than the statewide rate of 10.6. More notably, the rate of [crimes against property](#) was 15 per 1,000 residents in 2021, down from 26 in 2012 and a 21% decline from 2020. The rates of

crimes against people in Essex County are a bit lower than the statewide rates, and slightly above the figures in Middlesex County.

At 1.1 arrests per 1,000 residents, the [drug-related arrest](#) rate in Essex County in 2021 was higher than the statewide rate of 0.8 during the same year, while Lawrence was triple the rate (3.8).

The rate of reported [victims of domestic violence](#) in Essex County in 2021 was 3.3 per 1,000 residents, similar to the prior year. While lower than the statewide figure, the rate of domestic violence in Essex County has been higher than the rate in Middlesex County.

In 2021, an average of 14 residents per 10,000 were [incarcerated](#) in Essex County, down from 24 in 2014 but greater than the statewide rate of 9. The [recidivism rate](#) in Essex County declined. Among inmates released in 2016, 32% returned to prison within 3 years, down from 42% of inmates released in 2009. The decline in Essex County matches a statewide figure over the same time period.

[Voter participation](#) was 68% in the 2020 Presidential election. The turnout rate in 2020 was higher than previous elections since 2000. Voter participation in the county over the past two elections is similar to Middlesex County and a bit higher than the statewide figure.

In 2020, Essex County [residents contributed](#) 0.9% of their income to [charitable organizations](#), lower than the state and national charitable donation rates of 1.5% each. The rate of giving has declined in the county, state and nation over the last decade.

Over \$1 billion was [spent on travel and tourism](#) in Essex County in 2019, good for \$1,390 per county resident. This was a 19% increase for the county since 2006. Essex County's increase since 2006 was slightly higher than Middlesex and similar to the State's.

In 2021, 89% of days with air quality measurements in Essex County were categorized as [good air days](#), slightly higher than the rate in 2020 and a 20 percentage point increase from 2000. Still, Essex County lags behind Middlesex County (93%) in terms of air quality.

Economy and Workforce

Essex County's economy has rebounded to a degree from the depths of the national recession of 2008-09 and several key sectors are gaining jobs, but salaries have only kept pace with inflation.

[Total jobs](#) increased 4% from 2020 to 2021 representing a rebound from a 5.7% job loss from 2019 to 2020 due to the COVID pandemic. That rate of growth was above the state, nation and above Essex County's comparable counties.

[Growing sectors](#) in Essex County include Financial Activities, which increased 82% in total jobs from 2001 to 2021, Healthcare and Social Assistance (46%) and Professional and Business Services (20%) sectors. Trends in Essex County were very similar to statewide and national trends, as well as to comparable counties.

The largest sectors in Essex County were very similar to the state and nation: 15% of total jobs were in Health Care and Social Assistance and 18% in Trade, Transportation and Utilities, 14% in Professional and Business Services and 9% in each of the following: Financial Activities, Government, Leisure and Hospitality and Manufacturing.

The [highest paid sector](#) in Essex County was Financial Activities, with an average annual salary of \$111,300 in 2021. This was followed by Information (\$110,200) and Manufacturing (\$103,800). The lowest paid sector was Leisure and Hospitality (\$29,200). This was similar to the state and nation, where the Financial Activities (\$165,300 and \$114,900, respectively) and Information sectors (\$150,700 and \$147,700, respectively) were the two highest earning sectors.

Overall, [yearly salaries](#) in Essex County averaged \$71,200 in 2021 and increased 15% from 2000 after adjusting for inflation. This is in contrast to the state, where the average salary has increased by 26% and the nation, with a 22% increase over the same time period. (All financial data is presented in real terms.)

From 2000 to 2021, salaries grew fastest in Essex County in the Financial Activities (62%), Professional and Business Services (31%) and Manufacturing (23%) sectors, while the Information sector had the largest decrease (-1%). Although Essex County, the state and nation had similar changes in many sectors, the state and nation both had increases in average salaries in Information of 43% and 64% respectively.

In Essex County, as in the state and nation, [women's earnings](#) tended to lag men's earnings in the same occupations. For all occupations, Essex County women earned 78% of men's earnings.

Like the state and nation, Essex County's economy is dominated by [small employers](#). In 2020, over half (55%) of businesses in Essex County employed 1-4 people, 19% employed 5-9 people, 12% employed 10-19 people and the remaining 14% employed 20 people or more. Only 3% of employers, less than 500 businesses, had 100 or more employees. This has not changed substantially since 2000.

[Self-employment](#) in Essex County brings in more revenue per resident than for the nation as a whole. Essex County had about \$7,900 in self-employment revenue per

resident in 2019, above the state and over \$1,000 higher per resident than the nation. Essex County's level was up 6% since 2000.

[Unemployment](#) in the county fell to 6.4% in 2021. This represents a decline from the previous year when the rate peaked at 10.4% due to COVID in 2020. The unemployment rate in Essex County was higher than the state, nation and comparable counties.

In 2017-21, [unemployment was higher among Hispanic and African American](#) residents at about 9.4% and 4.1% than among Asian and white residents, similar to the disparities seen at the state and national levels.

In 2019, around 114,300 workers (44%) entered Essex County for work each year, and 174,100 residents (54%) left for work each year.

Education

As we emerge from the lowest points of the COVID pandemic, updated data points to potential concerns within the educational sector, including higher rates of school absence, lower enrollment in prekindergarten programs, and lower test performance on some assessments, particularly among students of color and those who are economically disadvantaged.

Educational success hinges upon myriad factors, but important ones include prekindergarten participation, school attendance and the adequacy of school funding. Prekindergarten helps prepare children both socially and academically for school, and can be especially important for low-income children who tend to be exposed to a less rich vocabulary and have access to fewer resources than their peers. In Essex County in 2021, 30% of 4-year-olds were [enrolled in public or private prekindergarten programs](#), down from 36% in 2002.

School attendance is increasingly measured by the share of students who miss 10% or more of the school year and are deemed "[chronically absent](#)." In 2021, 18% of students were chronically absent in Essex County, an increase of 4 points from 2020 and reflective of a general increase in chronic absenteeism statewide since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Some local districts had rates near or above 30%, including Peabody, Gloucester, Salem, and Haverhill.

[School spending](#) in Essex County across public school districts was \$18,100 per student in 2021, close to the statewide level of \$19,100 and below the level in Middlesex, MA of \$19,900. Spending in Essex County has increased 20% since 2008, after adjusting for inflation. The highest spending districts in Essex County were some of the vocational schools, with per-student spending levels at or above \$20,000.

[Enrollment in higher levels of schooling](#) favors females, with women making up 58% of undergraduate college students and 62% of students in graduate and professional schools in Essex County. These disparities are similar to the state and national levels.

Measures of academic achievement show the majority of students in Essex County are considered proficient in key subjects, but many are not. Disparities in academic achievement remain significant, though some groups have made considerable progress over the last decade.

Third grade is an important milestone, particularly in the development of students' literacy skills. Through third grade, many students are learning to read; from third grade on, they need to be able to read to learn. In Essex County in 2022, 39% of [3rd graders were considered proficient on the state's English Language Arts exams](#), down 6 points from the previous year.

Proficiency was lower among economically disadvantaged students (23%), Hispanic students (20%) and African American students (30%) compared with those who were not disadvantaged (57%) and white and Asian students (53% and 55%, respectively). The passing rates in 2022 show marked declines for some groups, including economically disadvantaged students (down 32 points from 2019), Hispanic students (down 20 points) and African American students (down 14 points).

Similarly, 8th grade is an important benchmark for the development of math skills, as students are studying or will soon move into study of algebra and other high school-level math courses. In 2022, 34% of Essex County [8th graders were considered proficient on the state's math exam](#). But on this exam as well, rates were lower among some groups: 19% among economically disadvantaged students and 18% among Hispanic students and 22% among African American students. Here too, 2022 passing rates were far lower for some groups, including economically disadvantaged students (down 29 points from 2017), Hispanic students (down 15 points) and African American students (down 12 points).

Massachusetts requires students to pass [10th grade level state tests in math and English](#) in order to graduate. In 2022, 54% of [10th graders passed the state's language arts exam](#) and 43% passed the math exam. Disparities were less pronounced on the English exam, with 25% of economically disadvantaged students, 22% of Hispanic students and 25% of African American students passing in 2022.

[High school graduation rates](#) in Essex County have been rising, with 90% of the 2017 cohort graduating in 2021, up 13 percentage points from 2006 and on par with the state graduation rate. Fourteen districts in the county had graduation rates of 95% or higher. The lowest graduation rates were in Salem and Lawrence (both 79%). Lawrence, however, had the largest gain since 2006, with a 38-point increase.

Students from low-income backgrounds graduated at a somewhat lower rate 83% in 2021, though that was up significantly from 61% in 2006. Hispanic students in the 2017 cohort graduated at a lower rate (83%) in 2021 compared to 95% of Asian students, 93% of white students, and 92% of African American students. These disparities were comparable to rates at the state level among the same groups, although Essex County's rate among African American students was 8 points higher than the state.

[Essex County is a highly educated county](#) in terms of the adult population, with 41% of adults in 2017-21 having at least a bachelor's degree, up from 31% in 2000. That is above the national rate (34%) but below Massachusetts' rate of 45% and below the rates in comparison counties: 58% in Middlesex, MA, 51% in Westchester, NY, and 46% in Lake, IL.

Some parts of Essex County and some groups within Essex County had much lower levels of education. In the cities of Lawrence and Lynn, just 14% and 21%, respectively, of adults had at least a bachelor's. And throughout the county, only 15% of Hispanic residents had a bachelor's or higher degree.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

Despite generally low poverty rates, Essex is an expensive county that requires a level of income that data suggests many residents and families lack.

In 2017-21, 9% of Essex County residents had [incomes at or below the poverty level](#), similar to the state rate and less than the national level of 13%. [Median incomes](#) in Essex County were generally 15-30% higher than national levels as well, depending upon the group.

But Essex County has pockets of poverty and [stark disparities among racial and ethnic groups](#). In the cities of Lawrence and Lynn, poverty rates are higher. Countywide, 16% of African Americans and 20% of Hispanics were living in poverty, compared to 7% of Asians and 8% of whites.

[Median household incomes](#) are far higher for Asians and whites (in the \$93,000-\$121,000 range) than for African Americans and Hispanics (\$52,000-\$63,000). Single-parent households are particularly disadvantaged, [with a median income](#) for female-headed households with children of just \$36,700 in 2017-21.

Actual incomes are far below what is needed to make ends meet in Essex County for some residents and families. [Living wages](#) for a family of three with a single earner (a working parent and two children) would require an annual income of more than \$120,800 in Essex County – far above the actual median income for either female- or male-headed households (which is \$36,700 and \$53,300 respectively).

In addition, the living wage model and income statistics suggest that a much broader group of families may find it very difficult to get by. A family of four with two earners (two working parents and two children) needs \$133,300 annually, or nearly five times the poverty level, which is \$27,479 for such a family. In Essex County, 65% of residents have incomes that are triple the poverty level, and 25% have incomes between 100% and 299% of poverty. While these statistics are not an exact match (mixing family and individual metrics), they do suggest that the cost of living in Essex County prevents many from being economically secure.

In terms of participation in programs to help individuals and families facing financial challenges, Essex County has seen the biggest increase in the share of [households receiving federal food assistance](#) (SNAP). In 2017-21, 15% of households received SNAP benefits, with higher levels in Lawrence (40%) and Lynn (26%). About 4.3% of Essex County households in 2017-21 [received TANF](#) (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), an increase from 2000 and higher than the state and nation.

About 11% of residents filed for the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#), which provides tax credits or refunds low-income workers. That was a bit higher than the state and lower than the nation, likely reflecting that incomes in Essex County are above national incomes.

In 2023, 47% of Essex County students were [economically disadvantaged](#), up from 28% in 2015. Here too, Essex County was above the state rate (42%).

A lack of financial self-sufficiency shows up in Essex County's statistics on [homeownership](#) and [housing affordability](#).

[Home values](#) in Essex County have risen by 38% since 2000, and at \$462,900, the median home value in the county in 2017-21 was higher than both the state and the nation. This is good for homeowners, but the rising costs of homeownership can make it difficult for residents to purchase their first home. [Housing affordability for homeowners](#), as determined by the ratio of median home value to median household income, shows that homeownership is becoming increasingly unaffordable in the county, with the value of homes rising faster than household incomes.

The same is true for [renters](#) in Essex County, who spent 38% of their household income on rent in 2017-21, similar to the state level (34%), and higher than renters nationwide (31%).

[Homelessness](#) is a growing issue in Essex County, with 11 homeless persons per 10,000 residents in 2020. The rate also increased in Massachusetts over this time span from 24 to 26. Nationwide, homelessness has decreased from 21 to 18 per 10,000 residents over the same period of time.

The homeownership rate in Essex County has remained steady since 2000. In 2017-21, 64% of all homes were owner-occupied, the same rate as 2000. Despite this consistency, [homeownership rates](#) vary greatly among local areas. Only 29% of homes in Lawrence were owner-occupied in 2017-21, along with 48% in Lynn and 52% in Salem. By contrast, the homeownership rates Boxford, Groveland, and West Newbury were over 90%. Essex County has greater [racial and ethnic disparities in homeownership](#) than the nation. In 2017-21, 70% of white and Asian residents owned their home, compared to 38% of African Americans and 31% of Hispanics. Nationwide, homeownership was higher among African American and Hispanic residents at 43% and 49% respectively.

Health

While [health insurance](#) is widespread in Essex County, as it is throughout Massachusetts, the county shares many of the same health concerns as the nation: [obesity](#), [diabetes](#), [smoking](#), [cancer](#) and [drug addiction](#). The opioid crisis has hit Essex County particularly hard, as evidenced by high [rates of admissions for treatment](#) and [deaths from overdose](#).

Just 4% of Essex County residents under 65 in 2020 [lacked health insurance](#), similar to the state but far below the national rate of 10%.

While Essex County was not immune from any of the nation's leading health-related problems, the area where it stood out was substance abuse. A national survey found rising rates of [illegal drug use](#) that were somewhat higher in the county (20% of adults and 16% of youth said they used an illegal drug in the last 30 days) than in the nation. And the rate of [drug overdose deaths](#) in Essex County, 35 per 100,000 residents, was higher than the national rate of 30 per 100,000.

State data on [treatment admissions](#) shows that though substance use remains a problem, treatment may be less available. Essex County had 87 admissions to treatment per 10,000 residents in 2021, down 46% from 2018. The decline began in 2019 and accelerated in 2020 when the COVID pandemic began. In both Essex County and the state, heroin and opioids were the most common primary drug, making up nearly half of all admissions.

In other areas of behavioral health and general health, Essex County more closely mirrors other areas:

- About 15% of adults [smoke](#).
- About 4.8% report suffering from [mental illness](#).

-
- The [suicide rate](#) of 0.7 deaths per 10,000 residents reflects an increase from 53 in 2000 to 62 in 2020, below the peak of 93 per 10,000 in 2017.
 - About 63% of [adults](#) and 35% of [children](#) were overweight or obese.
 - The overall [mortality rate](#) has been declining, falling 3% since 2000.
 - The rate of new [cancers](#) was 46 per 10,000 and similar to the state, nation and 2 of the three comparison counties.

Essex County had a relatively high rate of newly identified [diabetes](#) cases of 60 per 10,000 in 2019, higher than the state and two of the three comparison counties.

Racial Equity

Systemic racism is a global, national and local issue, underlying and amplifying many of our most critical social challenges. As detailed in the sections above, we observe racial and ethnic disparities within such areas of life as Children & Youth, Economy & Workforce, Education and Financial Self-Sufficiency..

The disparity data reflects the effects of centuries of structural racism in America, starting with the simultaneous genocide of indigenous peoples and enslavement of Africans and moving through the development and institutionalization of racist ideology and policies impacting nearly every facet of life in this country. In the United States, long-standing and far-reaching structural systems have been created and sustained over centuries to hinder access to economic, educational and social opportunities for people of color and their families, while also facilitating greater access to those opportunities for White people and their families.

These historic and current policies, practices and systems include housing policies that restrict access to people of color, employment discrimination, unequal access to financial services and capital, education systems that fail to equitably educate all students, racism in health care delivery, racial profiling and inequitable sentencing in policing and criminal justice and many others. These inequities have compounded over generations, impacting decades of family members. This is significantly illustrated by the [redlining practices](#) of the 1930s that blocked Black people and people of color from securing real estate, leaving them unable to benefit from a critical opportunity to create and transfer wealth across generations.

In our county of more than 807,000 people, many are impacted. While Essex County is 75% White, our population includes about 35,700 African Americans (4%), 27,600 Asians (3%), and 52,900 people (6%) who identify as being of two or more races. In

addition, people of Hispanic heritage (which is considered by the U.S. Census to be an ethnicity, rather than a race) make up 22% of our residents, or about 178,300 people.

We recommend the following resources to learn more about structural racism: *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander (<https://newjimcrow.com/>), Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, *The Color of Law* by Richard Rothstein and *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi. There are also data resources such as the [National Equity Atlas](#); racial equity-focused research from organizations like the [Urban Institute](#); tools for learning and change such as those available at [Racial Equity Tools](#), and personal narratives from writers such as [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#).