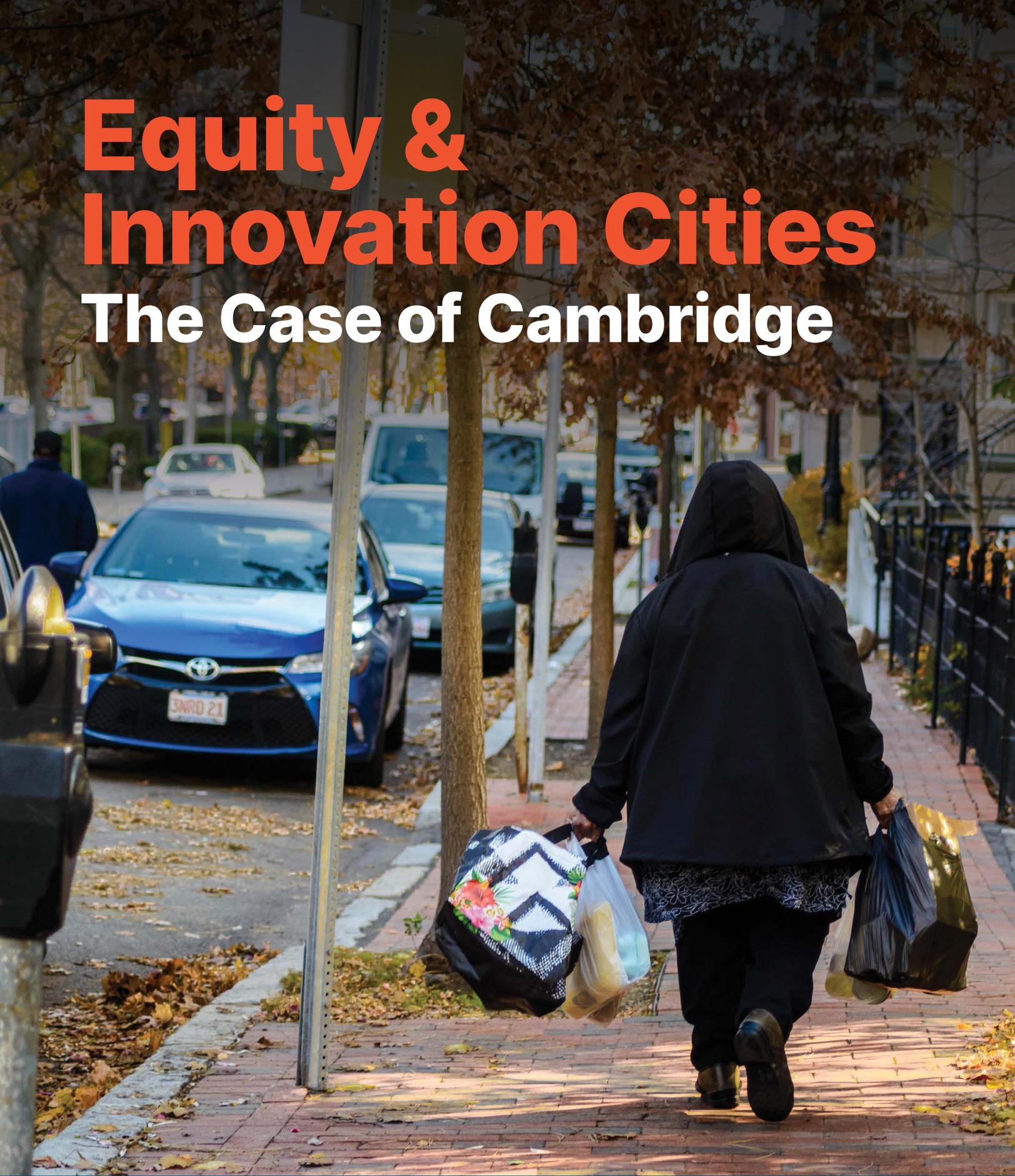


Equity & Innovation Cities

The Case of Cambridge



A Research Report



CAMBRIDGE
Community Foundation



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Equity & Innovation Cities

The Case of Cambridge

A Research Report by the Cambridge Community Foundation

APRIL 2021

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About the Cambridge Community Foundation

The Cambridge Community Foundation is the local giving platform supporting our city's shared prosperity, social equity, and cultural richness, with roots that go a century deep. A civic leader, philanthropic partner, and grant maker, the Foundation highlights emerging and critical needs and catalyzes efforts to ensure resources are focused where they can make the greatest difference.

Front cover: *Central Square* photo by Lou Jones. Opposite page: *Kendall Square* photo by Sam Seidel.

Back cover: *Starlight Square* photo by Nick Surette, courtesy of the Central Square Business Improvement District.

Introduction

A new Cambridge emerges



The new Cambridge and the old Cambridge live side by side. *Photo by Lou Jones.*

Cambridge has changed. For more than three centuries Cambridge has been considered an education mecca. And now, the city has also joined the ranks of 25 leading innovation capitals in the country — urban centers like San Francisco, Seattle, Denver, Austin, and Nashville — that have high concentrations of entrepreneurship, venture capital expenditure, and start-up activity, particularly in fields like tech, biotech, and the life sciences.

Powered by the city's famous universities and the talent they attract, in addition to massive private investment, the positive changes in Cambridge have been striking. But not everyone has shared the prosperity and opportunities this new paradigm has generated.

Cambridge is a story of juxtapositions — an intertwining of success and shortfall, wealth and poverty, dynamism and dispossession. The higher education world that drove the local economy has been surpassed by its offspring, innovation; there are now more jobs in technology companies than in the academic institutions that have shaped the city for generations. New populations have moved in,

attracted by and contributing to the city's explosive innovation economy, while long-standing populations that contributed so much to the city's creative diversity are in decline. Cambridge offers prosperity for some, but poverty and strain for many others.

In many ways, Cambridge is a deeply progressive city, where government-led efforts range from participatory budgeting and affordable housing development to comprehensive support for single mothers and trainings in anti-racism and racial equity in the public schools. For a city so proud of its perspective on virtually every social and political topic, the numbers in this report reveal some shocking truths. Inequalities remain, and they have been exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, which is making the losses greater and more widespread, the pain more acute and uneven, the recovery further from our grasp, and the future more uncertain.

The pandemic altered our lives in 2020, but the Cambridge we are waking up to today has been in the making for many years. Income inequality, the loss of the middle class, the closing of small businesses, ongoing gentrification, escalating housing costs, and deep racial disparities in education, wealth, and access to opportunity — these trends have been accelerating at least since the 2008 recession. They are among the challenges confronting Cambridge and other innovation cities across the country.

Looking back at the past decade, we can see that innovation-driven growth and prosperity obscured cracks in our civic foundation that threaten the very things that make Cambridge special — its diversity of people, households, and businesses; its range of races, religions, ethnicities, incomes, and ideas; and the sense of community that comes from being welcoming and accessible to all.

This report places Cambridge in the context of other innovation cities and provides data on the impacts of its economic success on our community. While the findings are not surprising, the report looks at the data in a new way, considering Cambridge in depth across five income segments, or quintiles, to understand the divergent lives of individuals within those segments.¹ Further research



Can the pandemic be a catalyst for change in Cambridge?
Photos by Kristen Joy Emack.

"I WANT DESPERATELY FOR THIS PANDEMIC TO BE A CATALYST FOR CHANGE. I HAVE OFTEN HOPED THAT THE PANDEMIC WOULD BRING HOME HOW UNEVEN THE PLAYING FIELD IS FOR LOW-INCOME PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND WOULD MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO WALK THE TALK AND MOBILIZE FOR FAR DEEPER, MORE MEANINGFUL CHANGE."

**— RICK WEISSBOURD,
PSYCHOLOGIST AND PROFESSOR**

is required to work out the full implications of the data presented here, but these numbers can act as a starting point for a nuanced conversation.

We seek a deep, well-informed dialogue leading to a civic agenda that brings together all sectors of the city — community leaders, CEOs, employees, philanthropists, nonprofit and faith leaders, universities, artists, local government, and members of the community. Building on the solid data assembled here, the city's Envision Cambridge planning process, and the wise counsel of fellow Cantabrigians, we hope to build a community where innovation thrives, opportunity abounds, and, most importantly, prosperity is shared.

¹ Additional data as well as information on the data sets and sources used are available in the online version of this report, at <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.
A note on data: There may be fluctuations in data depending on sample year and margins of error.

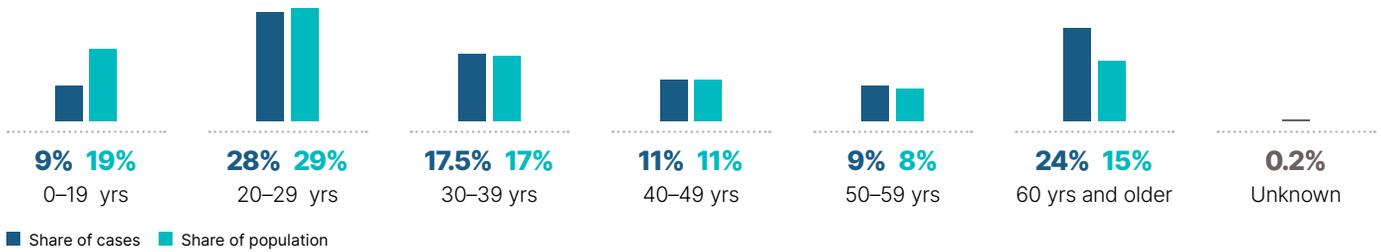


Impacts of COVID-19

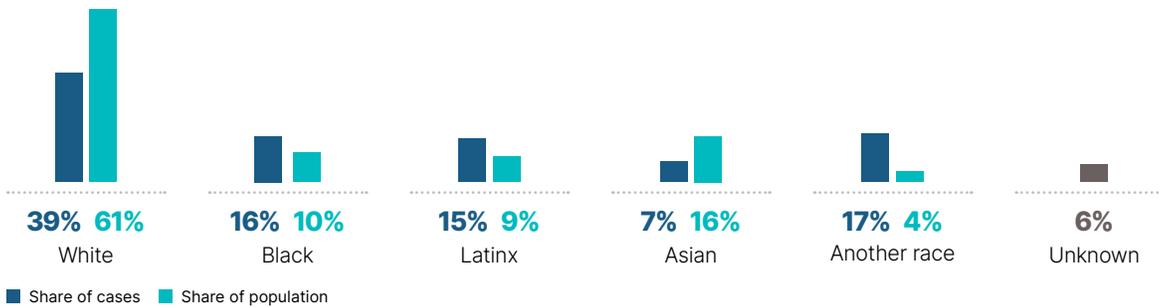
The COVID-19 global pandemic has profoundly impacted lives and livelihoods in Cambridge

COVID-19 CASES: As of year-end 2020, the Cambridge Public Health Department reported 3,296 cumulative cases among residents and 108 deaths from COVID-19, with a disproportionate share among people of color and those over 60.

COVID-19 Cases by Age



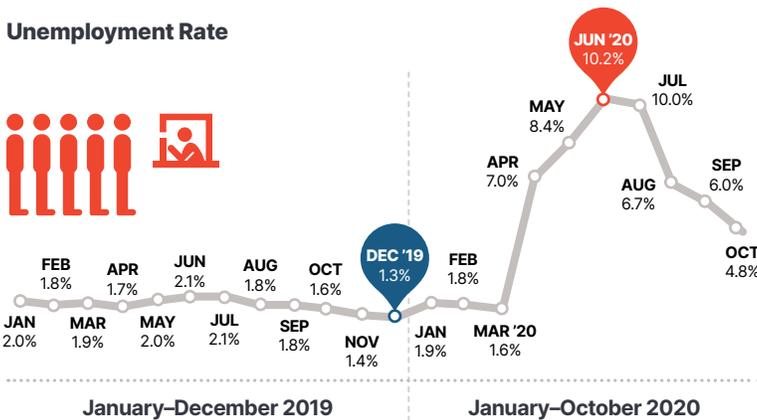
COVID-19 Cases by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Cambridge Public Health Department.

JOB LOSS: After reaching a record low unemployment rate of just over 1 percent in December 2019, by June 2020 Cambridge's unemployment rate had skyrocketed to more than 10 percent before falling to just under half that in October.

Unemployment Rate



80

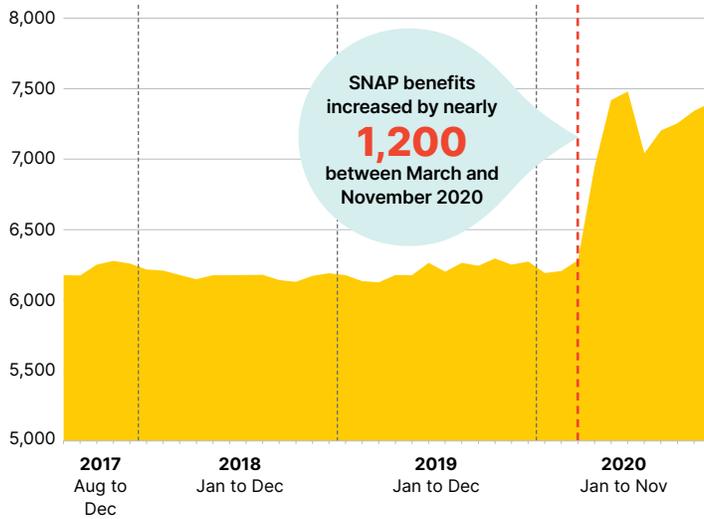
LOCAL BUSINESSES CLOSED THEIR DOORS TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY BETWEEN MARCH AND DECEMBER 2020

Source: City of Cambridge.

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

FOOD INSECURITY: The number of Cambridge residents receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, commonly known as food stamps, increased by nearly 1,200 between March and November, growing to 7,400 total recipients.

Cambridge SNAP Recipients, August 2017 to November 2020



Source: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance.

1 in 8 

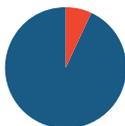
PEOPLE IN CAMBRIDGE AND GREATER BOSTON IS FOOD INSECURE

Source: Greater Boston Food Bank.

DIGITAL DIVIDE: Nearly 11 percent of Latinx and Black households in Cambridge lack a home internet connection, compared with just 7 percent of white households. This translates into less reliable access to online learning, work, health care, and social connectedness.

1 in 9 

LATINX AND BLACK HOUSEHOLDS LACKS A HOME INTERNET CONNECTION

7% 

OF WHITE NON-LATINX HOUSEHOLDS LACK A HOME INTERNET CONNECTION

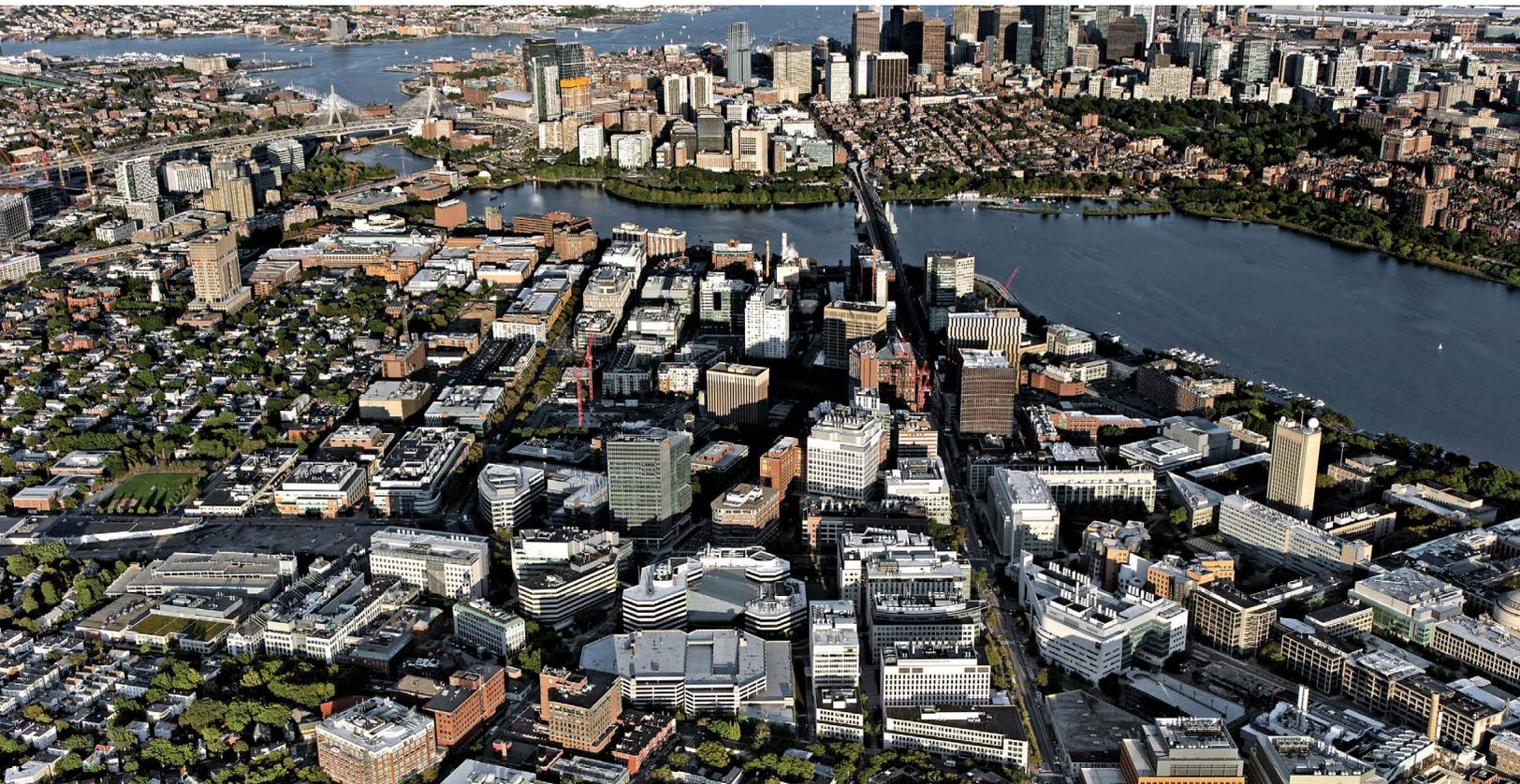
Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



Internet access has become essential for work and school.
Photo by Sam Seidel.

Chapter 1: Cambridge in Context

A comparison with other innovation cities



Kendall Square, in foreground, is the epicenter of the region's innovation economy. *Photo by Les Vants, courtesy of Cambridge Redevelopment Authority.*

The tension between economic success and social equity is not unique to Cambridge. A look at demographic, housing, and economic trends across a cohort of 25 innovation cities² — including established ones like San Francisco and Seattle, growing ones like Denver and Austin, and emerging ones like Nashville and Pittsburgh — reveals characteristics and challenges familiar to us in Cambridge.

Innovation Employment

Although by far the smallest of the cities, Cambridge is the leader in terms of employment in the innovation economy. With more than 20 percent of adults working in an innovation cluster occupation such as software development or biochemical research, Cambridge has a higher concentration of this workforce than any other innovation city, ranking above Seattle, with 15.4 percent, San Jose (14.9 percent), and San Francisco (12.5 percent). Moreover, Cambridge ranks sixth among the 25 cities — behind only Seattle, Miami, San Francisco, Denver, and Washington, D.C. — in the growth in this workforce since 2010.

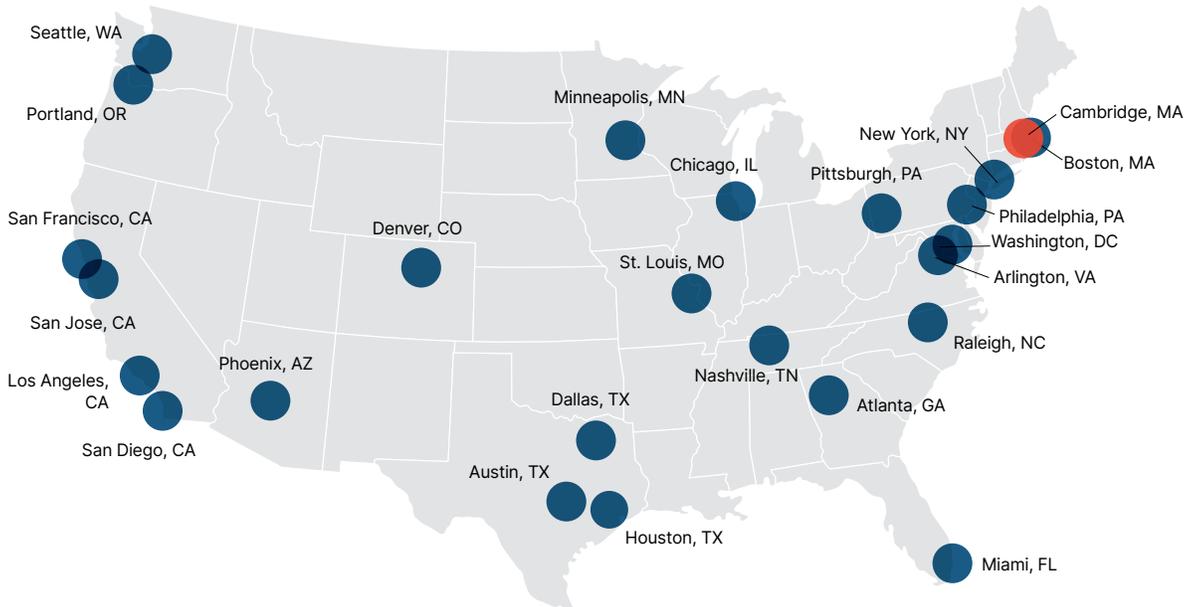
² The cohort of 25 innovation cities was chosen using the principal cities of the Brookings Institution's 20 "superstar metro areas" with the largest absolute numbers of jobs in innovation industries plus an additional four cities with demographic and economic similarities to Cambridge, which is a part of the Boston metro area. See: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Full-Report-Growth-Centers_PDF_BrookingsMetro-BassCenter-ITIF.pdf.

25 INNOVATION CITIES:

Innovation cities are defined by an economic base concentrated in high-tech, biotech, engineering, and life sciences jobs, and “the intrinsic qualities of cities: proximity, density, authenticity, and vibrant places.”³



Top Five Cities for Innovation Sector Employment



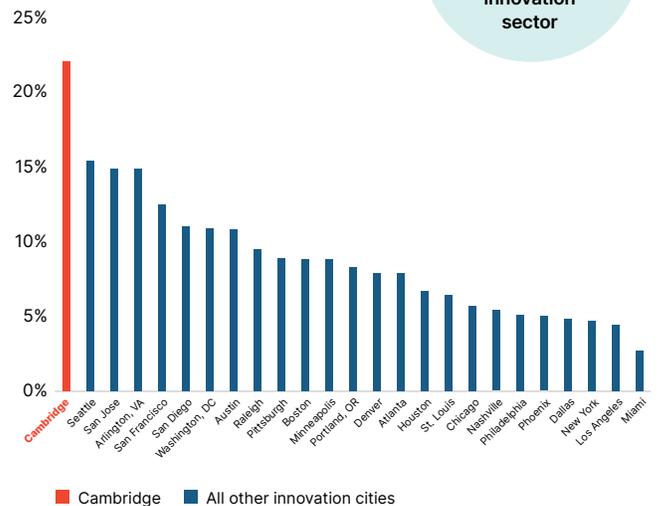
Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



"KENDALL SQUARE ENABLES THE FUTURE BY CONNECTING THE PEOPLE CHANGING THE WORLD. WE HELPED GUIDE THE FIRST MOON LANDING, MAP THE HUMAN GENOME, AND FAST-TRACK COVID-19 TESTING AND VACCINE DEVELOPMENT. NOW, OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE IS PIVOTING OUR POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND RESOURCES TO COLLECTIVELY AND COLLABORATIVELY CREATE EQUITY ACROSS THE REGION."

— C.A. WEBB, PRESIDENT, KENDALL SQUARE ASSOCIATION

Share of Residents Employed in the Innovation Sector



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

³ "Innovation Districts," *Brookings*, July 26, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/innovation-districts/>.

Income and Inequality

With a median household income topping \$95,000, Cambridge ranks fourth in income among today's leading innovation cities. In fact, Cambridge now ranks among the top cities in almost every measure of income — and also of inequality. Cambridge has the fourth-highest median household income, at just over \$95,000, behind only Arlington, Virginia, with \$117,374, San Francisco (\$104,552), and San Jose (\$104,234), and well above the 25-city median of \$60,762. Cambridge led all innovation cities in income growth in the past decade.

However, of the 25 innovation cities, Cambridge has the seventh-largest gap between average households in the top and bottom quintiles, behind only Boston, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., New York, Miami, and San Francisco, with the average household income in the highest quintile earning 25 times as much as in the lowest quintile.

\$343,000

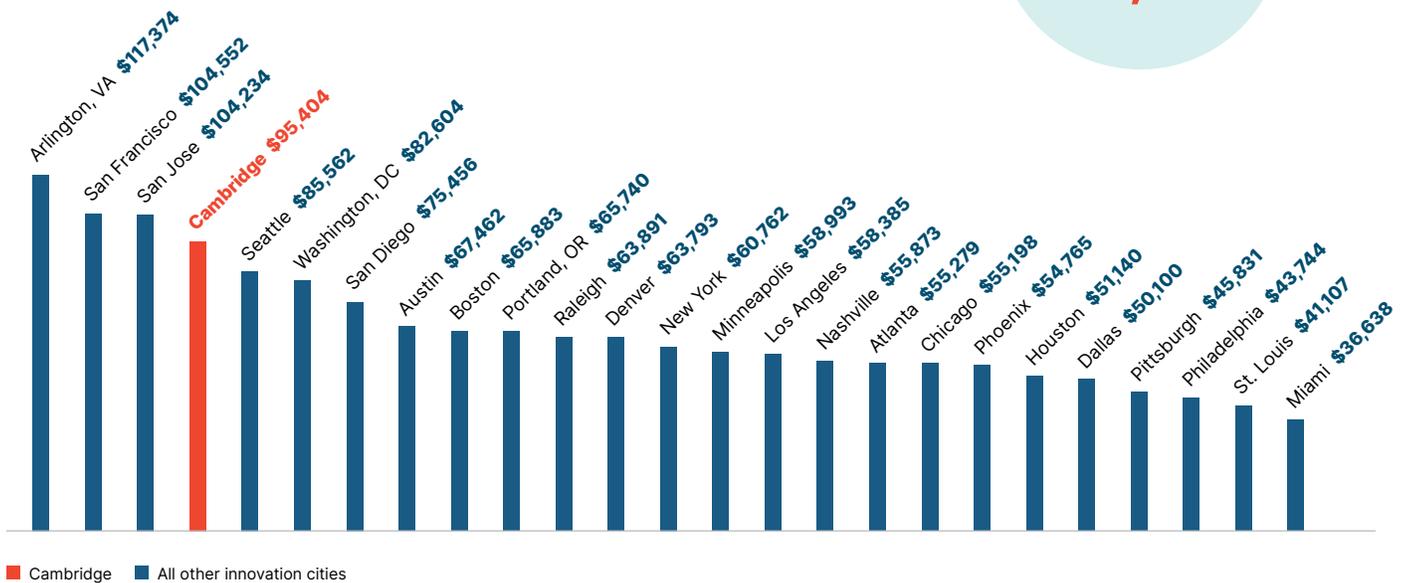
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR THE TOP INCOME GROUP

\$13,000

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR THE LOWEST INCOME GROUP

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Median Household Income, 2018



Cambridge has the fourth-highest median household income **\$95,404**

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Demographic Change

Cambridge resembles other innovation cities in the demographic changes now shaping it, including population growth in the millennial workforce, fewer children, and shifts in racial and ethnic diversity marked by a decline in the share of the Black population. All 25 innovation cities except Pittsburgh and St. Louis experienced some population growth over the past decade. Cambridge falls in the middle of the group in this respect, ranking 12th behind many of the growing innovation cities in the West and the Sunbelt.

Student and Millennial Workforce

Cambridge has the largest share of 18- to 34-year-olds of any innovation city. It leads the pack in the share of college-aged and millennial workforce populations, with 18- to 24-year-olds now comprising 20 percent of the population and 25- to 34-year-olds accounting for 28 percent. Both of these age groups are contributing to the city's population growth. Cambridge ranks second among innovation cities for overall growth in population between 18 and 34, with almost all of that growth attributable to the younger group.

Children

Children are disappearing from innovation cities nationwide. With the exception of Arlington, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., all of the innovation cities have lost children since 2010. Cambridge ranks among those with the largest decline in the under-18 population, and now has the smallest child population of all innovation cities. Children under 18 make up just 12.4 percent of the city's population.

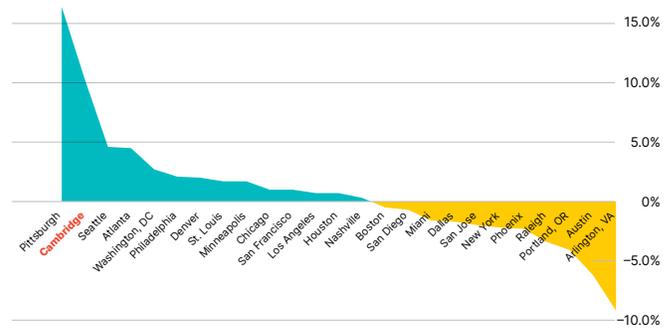
12.4%

CAMBRIDGE HAS THE SMALLEST CHILD POPULATION OF ALL INNOVATION CITIES



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Change in Population 18 to 34 Years Old, 2010–2018



Increase in Population

Pittsburgh	16.4%
Cambridge	10.3%
Seattle	4.6%
Atlanta	4.5%
Washington, DC	2.7%
Philadelphia	2.1%
Denver	2.0%
St. Louis	1.7%
Minneapolis	1.7%
Chicago	1.0%
San Francisco	1.0%
Los Angeles	0.7%
Houston	0.7%
Nashville	0.3%

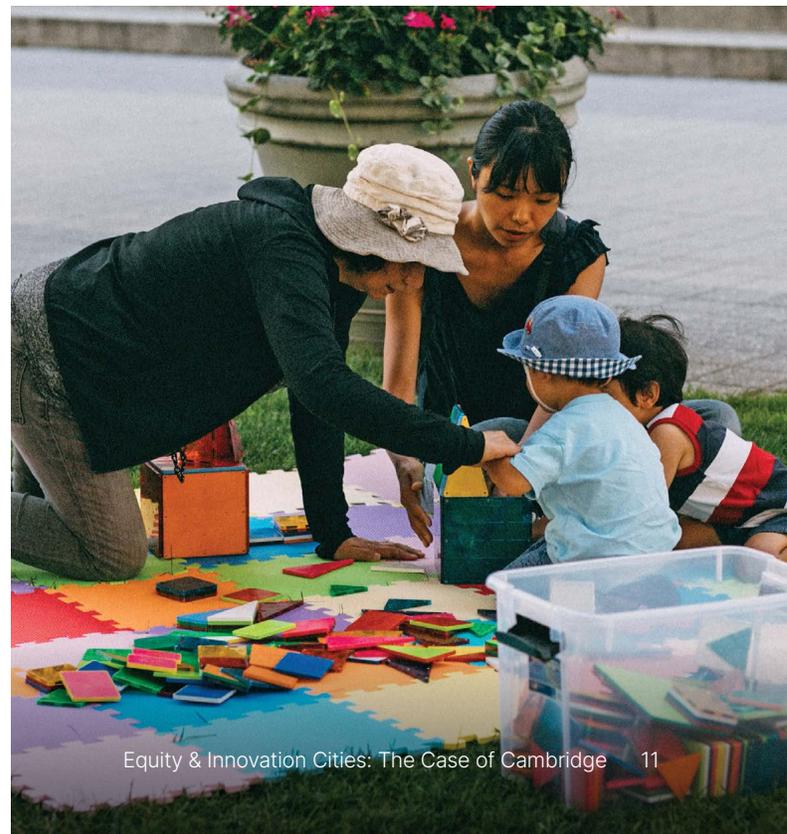


Decrease in Population

Boston	-0.5%
San Diego	-0.7%
Miami	-1.6%
Dallas	-1.7%
San Jose	-2.0%
New York	-2.2%
Phoenix	-2.3%
Raleigh	-3.4%
Portland, OR	-4.1%
Austin	-6.2%
Arlington, VA	-9.2%

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Families get together for fun at the Kendall Square Association's Film Night. Photo courtesy of Kendall Square Association.



Race and Ethnicity

Racial and ethnic shifts in innovation cities overall mirror those of Cambridge. When it comes to racial and ethnic diversity, innovation cities vary dramatically by region, with cities like Miami and Phoenix home to large Latinx populations, Atlanta and St. Louis with more Black residents, and San Jose and San Francisco with larger Asian American populations. Cambridge is among the innovation cities with larger white populations, ranking behind Portland, Pittsburgh, and Seattle. When these populations are taken as a whole, however, innovation cities mirror patterns seen in Cambridge: large growth in the Asian and Latinx populations, a slight uptick in the white population, and either a decrease or no change in the Black population.

Housing Costs

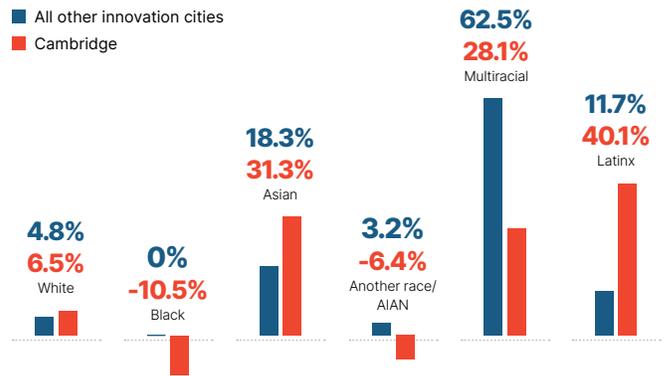
Cambridge's rental costs are nearly twice the innovation city median. Cambridge is among the most expensive innovation cities when it comes to the cost of housing for both owners and renters. With a median value of over \$700,000, Cambridge ranks behind only San Francisco (\$1,009,500) and San Jose (\$793,100) in home prices.

And it has the highest median contract rental price, at almost \$2,000 a month — nearly double the innovation city median of just over \$1,000 a month and more than eight times higher than cities like Pittsburgh and St. Louis, which have the lowest median contract rent at \$764 and \$620, respectively. It is worth noting that the average contract rent, which includes subsidized affordable and rent-controlled units, is often lower than the average market rate rent, which was just below \$3,000 a month in Cambridge in December 2020, according to RENTCafé.

"WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, YOUR NEIGHBORS WERE YOUR FAMILY, AND THE CITY WAS A MELTING POT WITH PEOPLE OF EVERY RACE AND CULTURE ALL MASHED TOGETHER SINCE THEN, I'VE WATCHED MANY FRIENDS LEAVE CAMBRIDGE."

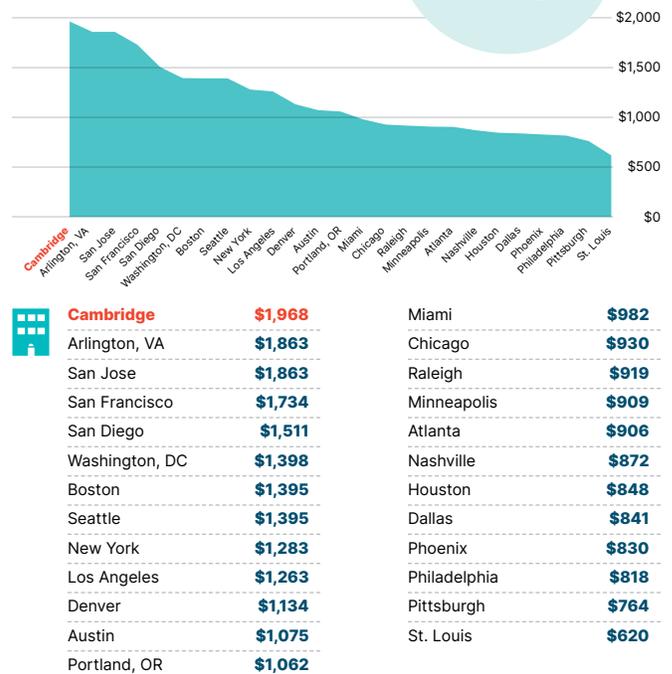
**— TEVIN CHARLES,
SMALL BUSINESS OWNER**

Change in Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010–2018



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Median Contract Rent, 2018



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

A Note on Race and Ethnicity

The Cambridge Community Foundation wants to find equity in action and in words, including with respect to racial categories depicted in this report. As a result, we have adjusted the standard naming conventions established by the U.S. Census bureau in the following ways: "Hispanic/Latino" ethnicity is referred to as "Latinx"; "Black" refers to "Black/African American"; "Asian" includes "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander"; "Multiracial" refers to "Two or More"; and "Another race/AIAN" includes "Some Other" and "American Indian/Alaska Native."

The status quo of racial and ethnic categories is insufficient at capturing the full diversity of individuals and historically marginalized populations, and is not reflective of the values of the Cambridge Community Foundation. Native and Indigenous people have been and continue to be a part of this land and our community, as do other people who are underrepresented in data. Because of small sample sizes, we lack data on the many ethnic identities that are represented in the Census Bureau's broader racial and ethnic categories.

Educational Attainment

Cambridge is by far the most highly educated

innovation city. Owing to its small size and distinction as home to two top universities, Cambridge is by far the most highly educated of the innovation cities, ranking first across the board on measures of adult educational attainment. Not only do roughly 80 percent of adults have at least a bachelor's degree and nearly half at least a master's degree, but also nearly 14 percent of adults have doctoral degrees, well above the innovation city median of 2.2 percent.

Total Population

Cambridge outperforms its size and scale. One thing that sets Cambridge apart from every other innovation city is its size and scale. While Cambridge ranks near the top among innovation cities in nearly all metrics of both innovation and inequality, it ranks lowest in population size. In fact, Cambridge is only half as large as the second smallest city, Arlington, Virginia. Though it is dwarfed by other innovation cities, Cambridge anchors a much larger regional innovation economy that includes both the city of Boston and the Waltham/128 corridor.

As this comparison makes clear, Cambridge today has taken its place among the nation's innovation cities — places with highly successful technology-based economies, significant increases in household income, and a growing young workforce. But there is a downside. Many of these cities, including Cambridge, are experiencing increasing gaps between the incomes of high and low earners and declines or stagnation in their Black populations. Beyond the statistics lies a loss of community cohesiveness, stability, and continuity as long-term populations are displaced by rising costs. Those compelled to leave are among the very populations that contributed to the city's attractiveness as a place to live, work, and raise children.

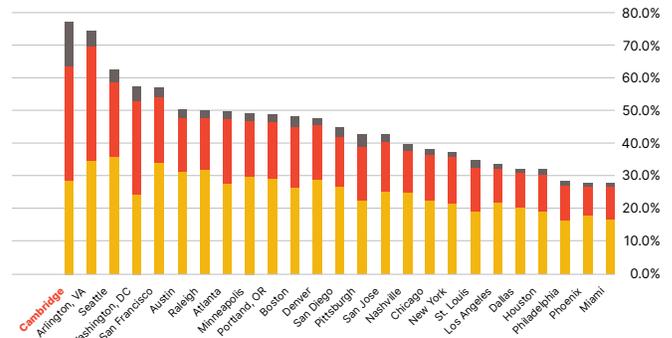
81%

**OF ADULTS IN CAMBRIDGE
HAVE A BACHELOR'S DEGREE
OR HIGHER**



Share of Adults with Advanced Degrees, 2018

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's or professional degree
- Doctoral degree



	28.7%	35%	13.7%
Cambridge			
Arlington, VA	34.9%	35%	4.7%
Seattle	36.2%	22.8%	3.8%
Washington, DC	24.4%	28.9%	4.3%
San Francisco	34.3%	20.1%	2.8%
Austin	31.5%	16.4%	2.6%
Raleigh	32.2%	15.9%	2.3%
Atlanta	27.7%	20.0%	2.2%
Minneapolis	29.9%	17.1%	2.4%
Portland, OR	29.4%	17.4%	2.2%
Boston	26.5%	18.9%	3.2%
Denver	29.2%	16.8%	1.9%
San Diego	26.8%	15.5%	3.0%
Pittsburgh	22.7%	16.6%	3.7%
San Jose	25.4%	15.2%	2.2%
Nashville	25.1%	12.7%	2.0%
Chicago	22.7%	14.1%	1.6%
New York	21.8%	14.1%	1.5%
St. Louis	19.2%	13.6%	2.2%
Los Angeles	22.1%	10.3%	1.4%
Dallas	20.4%	10.9%	1.1%
Houston	19.5%	11.0%	1.6%
Philadelphia	16.7%	10.4%	1.5%
Phoenix	18.0%	9.1%	1.0%
Miami	17.0%	9.8%	1.1%

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Chapter 2: A Dynamic Decade

Growth, inequality, and the ‘New Cambridge’



Cambridge has experienced a boom in young knowledge workers moving in. *Photo by Lou Jones.*

Cambridge is a remarkable place. It has about 1 percent of the population of New York City, and is about 13 percent of the size of Boston, yet it clearly outperforms its size in nearly every measure of innovation. Its past economies rested on such fragile foundations as the manufacture of candy and cut glass. It experienced the urban blues of so many older cities in the 20th century, steadily losing population as the decades wore on. For many years it seemed that without Harvard and MIT, Cambridge would not have been much of a draw for people. That was then.

Today, words like “powerhouse” hardly manage to describe the place. In a bold step in the 1970s, Cambridge became the first municipality to regulate recombinant DNA research — highly controversial at the time — thus providing a stable environment for then-start-up Biogen to site a DNA lab in the city. The move, supported by a committee of Cambridge citizens, sowed the seeds for Kendall Square, which by 2009 would be called “the most innovative square mile on earth” by the global management consulting firm Boston Consulting Group.⁴ The Cambridge of today is fueling innovations in technology that touch every aspect of our lives and will continue to define us long into the future.

⁴ <https://www.fastcompany.com/90234141/how-somerville-is-riding-the-train-to-a-high-tech-hot-spot>.

Of course, innovation has always been an integral part of Cambridge's identity. For nearly 400 years, the city has acted as a breeding ground for creative thinkers whose ideas and inventions have helped to change the world. The lockstitch sewing machine, the moon landing, the World Wide Web and social networking, lifesaving medical treatments, and Tony Award-winning artistic productions — all these and more have their roots in a city that is just over six square miles in size.

But today's Cambridge is being rapidly shaped by an innovation economy that has exploded in just the past decade or so.

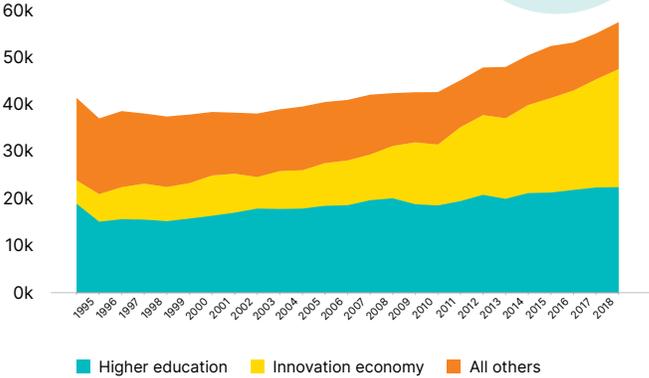
A Shifting Economy

The innovation economy — high tech, biotech, engineering, and life sciences — has overtaken higher education as the leading employer. Among Cambridge's top 25 largest employers — which provide nearly half of all jobs in the city — employment in the innovation cluster has more than doubled, from just over 11,000 jobs in 2010 to more than 25,000 in 2019. The innovation economy has now overtaken higher education as the top employment sector.

Employment in scientific research and development has grown by nearly 80 percent over the decade and now accounts for a fifth of jobs citywide and one in 10 business establishments.

25,000
innovation jobs
among top
employers

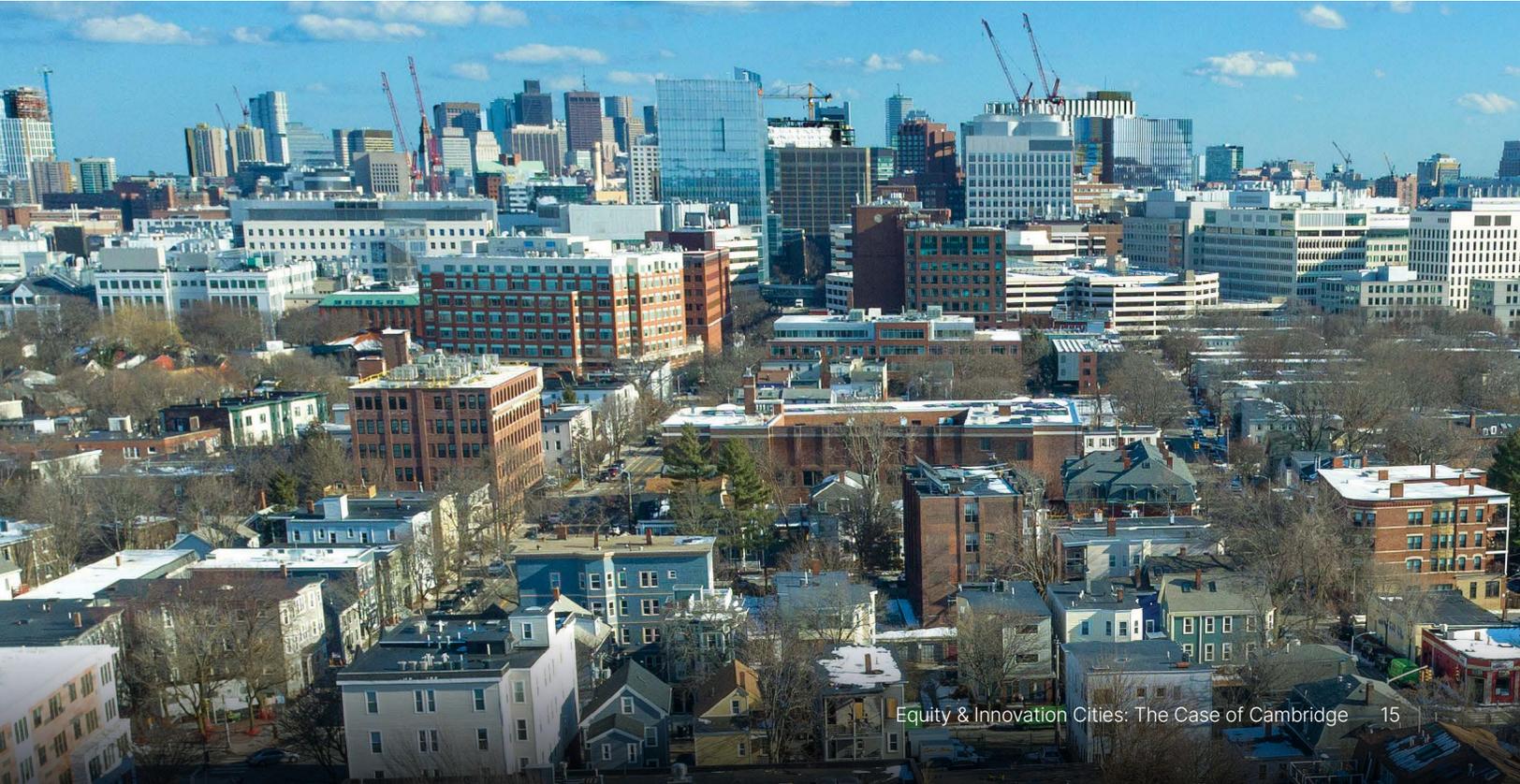
Top 25 Employers: Total Jobs by Sector, 1995–2019



Source: City of Cambridge.

Businesses in non-innovation sectors have benefited as well. After stagnating somewhat in the 1990s and early 2000s, Cambridge's business growth has been on an upward trajectory prior to COVID-19, with the total number of businesses in the city growing by nearly 20 percent in less than 10 years.

Below: Kendall Square rises among the diverse neighborhoods it borders. Photo by Greig Cranna.





Keisha Greaves. Photo courtesy of Keisha Greaves.

"CAMBRIDGE TRIES TO MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, SO EVERYONE CAN GET AROUND AND DO THEIR OWN THING. AND SOMEONE LIKE MYSELF, LIVING WITH MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY, I LOVE THAT WE HAVE SO MANY BIOTECH COMPANIES HERE."

— KEISHA GREAVES, LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER

Wages

By 2019, overall Cambridge wages topped \$18 billion, up 55 percent over the past decade.

The booming job market of the past decade also translated into wage gains for those who work in Cambridge. After being hit hard by the dot-com crash in the early 2000s and the 2008 Great Recession, workers' paychecks finally experienced strong growth in the past decade. Since 2010, total wages increased by 39 percent, while the average weekly wage increased by 15.5 percent when adjusted for inflation.

Between 2001 and 2019, wages from jobs in scientific R&D nearly quadrupled, growing from just over 9 percent of earned wages in 2001 to 32 percent in 2019.

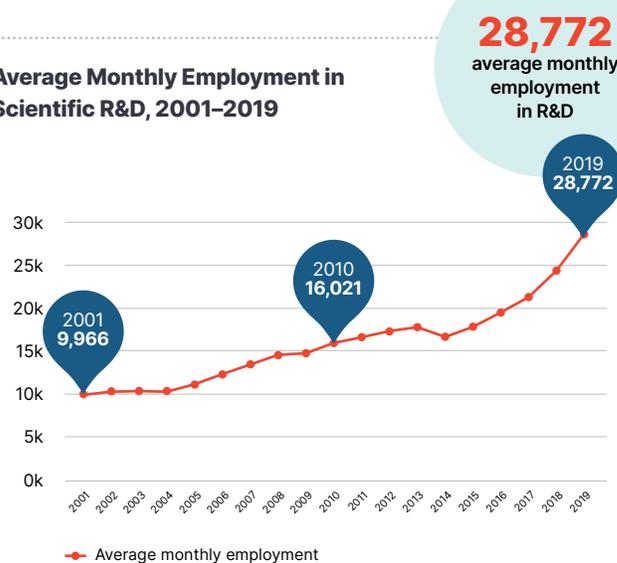
Capital Investment

The Cambridge innovation economy resulted in vast amounts of wealth within industry and for shareholders. Since 2000, Cambridge-based IPOs have generated more than \$8 billion at launch, with 20 percent of that amassed in 2018 alone.

Three of the nation's top 20 ZIP codes for total venture capital funding are located in Cambridge.

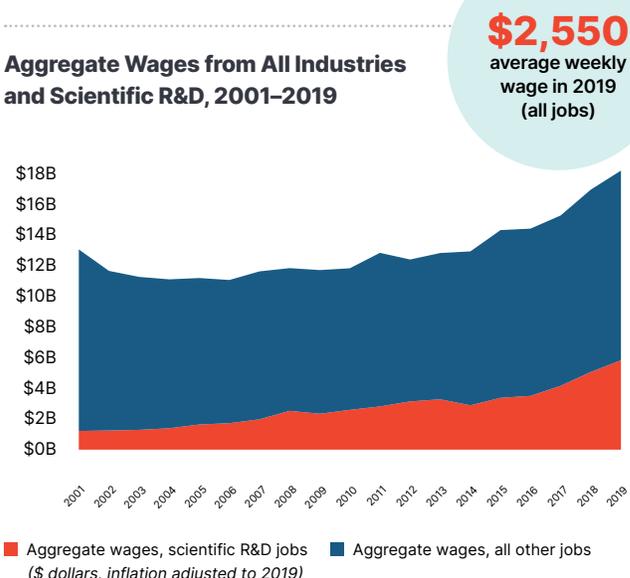
Cambridge is a leader when it comes to venture capital funding as well. According to data analyzed by the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute, three of the top 20 ZIP codes in the United States for VC support are located in Cambridge, and the city leads other areas of Massachusetts significantly in total investment funding.

Average Monthly Employment in Scientific R&D, 2001-2019



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Aggregate Wages from All Industries and Scientific R&D, 2001-2019



Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

Rising Incomes

Cambridge has outpaced income growth statewide.

Cambridge residents and households also experienced unprecedented prosperity over the past decade. As of 2018, the median annual household income crested above \$95,000 — a nearly 28 percent increase since 2010 when adjusted for inflation. This growth in Cambridge is in striking comparison to income trends statewide, which have remained relatively flat. Two decades ago, median household income in Cambridge was 6.5 percent lower than the statewide average, while in 2018 the median annual income was 23 percent higher than the statewide median.

Rising Home Values

For Cambridge homeowners, innovation-led growth has contributed to a pronounced increase in housing values.

As of fiscal year 2020, the combined assessed value of residential property in Cambridge was more than \$32 billion, an 85 percent increase since 2010. This rapid rise in home values reflects a large and growing source of wealth for Cambridge homeowners.

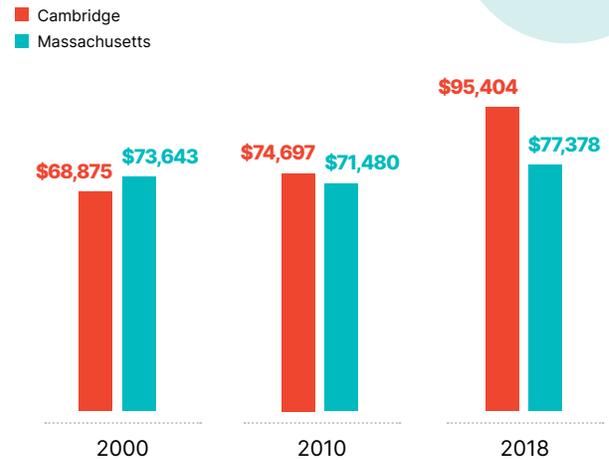
A Different City

The “new Cambridge” is younger, more highly educated, more mobile, and more diverse.

The implications of the recent, rapid growth of Cambridge’s innovation sector extend well beyond start-ups, IPOs, and the overall composition of the economy. They can be seen and felt in neighborhoods and on sidewalks, in the new buildings and storefronts, and in the changing lives and livelihoods of those who call Cambridge home. The resulting “new Cambridge” is younger, more highly educated, more mobile, and more diverse.

Beyond the economy, **the city’s broad-based growth is attracting more people.** Cambridge’s population has been experiencing a level of growth unprecedented in 40 years. Following decades of population loss and stagnation through the end of the 20th century, the total number of residents has increased by more than 13 percent since 2010. The city is nearing its 1950 population peak of 120,000.

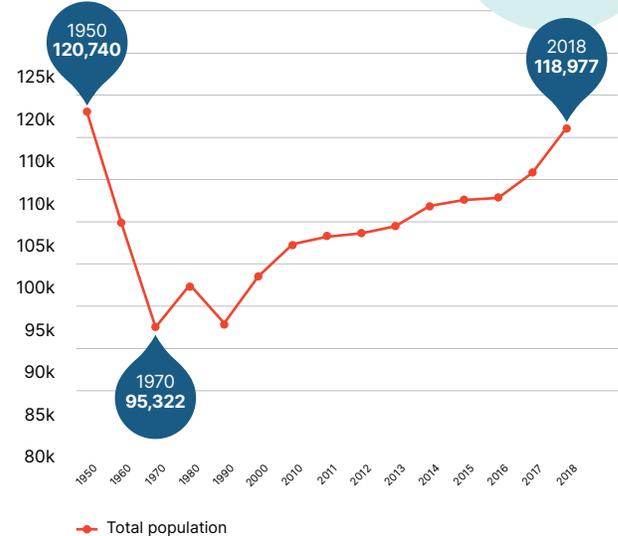
Median Household Income, 2000–2018 (inflation-adjusted)



Sources: 1950–2010 Decennial Census; 2011–2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

28%
increase in median household income since 2010

Total Population 1950–2018



Sources: 1950–2010 Decennial Census; 2011–2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

118,977
total population

Cambridge has become a city of young knowledge workers. Since 2010 almost all of Cambridge's population growth has been driven by the college-age and millennial workforce (ages 18 to 24 and 25 to 34, respectively). Combined, these groups grew from 42 percent to nearly half of the total population.

High educational attainment is now almost a prerequisite for living in Cambridge. An astounding 81 percent of adults have at least a bachelor's degree, up from 73 percent in 2010. More than half now have at least a master's degree.

The residents of Cambridge today are less likely to be homegrown. Just 27 percent of current residents are Massachusetts natives, down from almost a third in 2010. Of current residents, 41.5 percent were born in another state or territory, while an additional 31.7 percent hail from another country. Much of this regional diversity speaks to the draw of Cambridge's world-class universities — roughly a third of residents born outside of Massachusetts are undergraduate or graduate students, a rate that has remained constant over the decade.

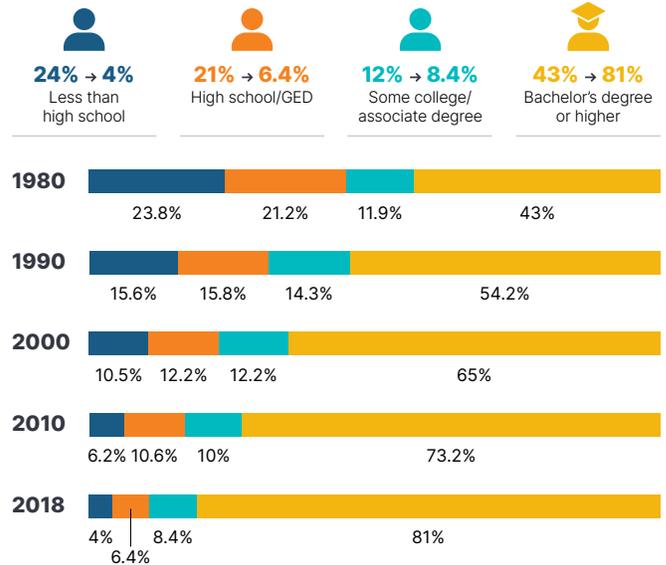
Cambridge has become more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, but with almost no growth in the Black population, whose relative share has declined. More than 66 percent of residents identify as white, nearly unchanged from 2010. Much of the increase in diversity has come from a growing Asian population, which has gone from 15 percent to 18.6 percent, and Latinx population, up from 7.6 percent to 11.4 percent. At the same time, the Black population numbers have remained virtually flat; as a result, the group now comprises less than 10 percent of the total population.

"GENTRIFICATION IS REAL. THE PORT WAS A MOSTLY BLACK AND LATINO NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT ALL OF MY FRIENDS ARE BEING PUSHED OUT. LIFELONG FRIENDS. IT HURTS."

— ELON FYFIELD, PROFESSIONAL RECORDING ARTIST

Educational Attainment for Adults 25 and Older, 1980–2018

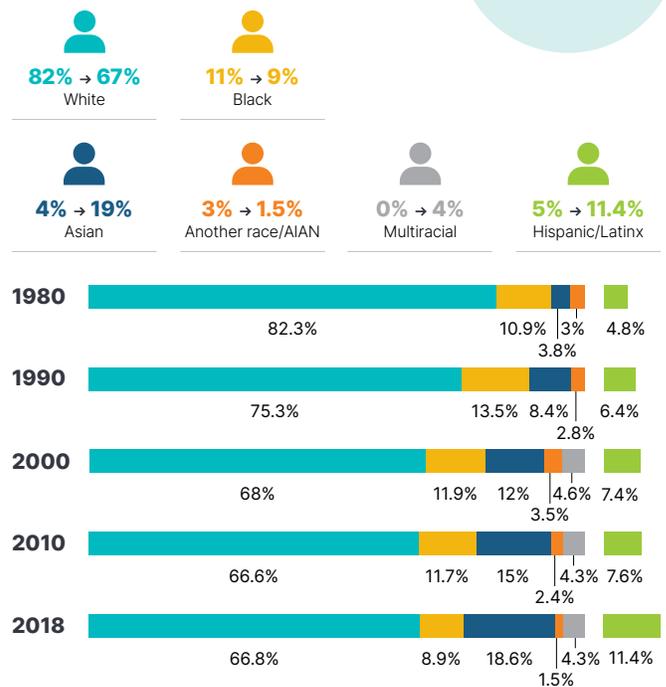
81%
bachelor's degree or higher in 2018



Sources: 1980–2000 Decennial Census; 2010 and 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Population by Race/Ethnicity, 1980–2018

42%
residents of color in 2018



Sources: 1980–2000 Decennial Census; 2010 and 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Note: In this chart, race and ethnicity are presented as separate categories. Figures add up to more than 100 percent due to overlap in racial categories and Latinx ethnicity.

Growing Inequality

The hollowing-out of middle- and low-income households has continued. From 2010 to 2018 the share of households earning less than \$50,000 declined from more than 40 percent to just over 26 percent, while those earning \$50,000 to \$99,999 — roughly middle-income in Cambridge — fell from 26 percent to 20 percent of households. By contrast, the share of households earning over \$200,000 more than doubled.

Economic benefits went primarily to the wealthy.

For some, the general upswing that was in progress when the 2008 recession hit continued after it ended. Nationwide, the benefits of the recovering economy went primarily to the wealthy, while the fortunes of the rest of the population generally declined or remained the same. Cambridge's economy showed remarkable resilience, but many of the problems that surfaced during the recession carried on. The slump presented an opportunity to begin again and reverse the trend toward increasing income and racial inequality, but instead, the disparities actually worsened.

One of the questions we face as a city is whether, given another opportunity to look at our essential issues and take action to reset the future, we will do so with success. Or will a city with both increasing wealth and increasing poverty continue its trajectory toward even greater inequality?

"I FEEL LIKE THERE'S NO REAL SUPPORT FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS — PEOPLE LIKE ME WHO ARE STUCK IN THIS NO-MAN'S LAND WHERE WE CAN'T AFFORD A LOT OF THINGS BUT OUR INCOME IS TOO HIGH TO QUALIFY FOR PROGRAMS. WE'RE NOT VERY GOOD AT RECOGNIZING THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE MIDDLE."

**— CHERRYANN GOODRIDGE,
DIGITAL MARKETING PROFESSIONAL**

Cambridge Households by Income, 2010 and 2018



Source: American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

21.4%
of households
earn more than
\$200,000

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity, 2010 and 2018



Source: American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

\$62,000
income gap
between Black
and all Cambridge
households

Cherryann Goodridge. Photo courtesy of Cherryann Goodridge.





Cambridge Demographic Profile

	1990	2000	2010	2018
Population	95,802	101,355	105,162	118,967
Household population	81,769	86,692	88,060	102,030
Group quarters population ⁵	14,033	14,663	17,102	16,937
Household Composition (% all Households)				
Family households	44.6%	41.3%	39.6%	43.4%
Married couples	31.5%	29.1%	28.9%	35.5%
Single parents	6.6%	6.3%	5.2%	3.3%
Other family types	6.5%	5.9%	5.5%	4.6%
Nonfamily households	55.4%	58.7%	60.4%	56.6%
Single person alone	42.3%	41.4%	40.7%	33.8%
Roommates	13.1%	17.3%	19.7%	22.8%
Age				
0–17	14.2%	13.3%	11.4%	11.6%
18–24	19.6%	21.2%	20.8%	21.2%
25–34	25.1%	24.9%	28.7%	28%
35–64	30.6%	31.5%	29.6%	28.9%
65+	10.5%	9.2%	9.5%	10.3%
Race and Ethnicity				
White, non-Latinx	71.6%	64.6%	62.1%	58.4%
Black, non-Latinx	12.7%	11.5%	11.0%	7.6%
Asian or Pacific Islander, non-Latinx	8.4%	11.9%	15.1%	18.5%
Latinx (any race)	6.8%	7.4%	7.6%	11.4%
Another race/AIAN non-Latinx	0.4%	4.5%	4.1%	4%
Nativity				
Foreign-born as a percent of total population	22.3%	25.9%	27.2%	31.7%
Speaking language other than English at home (ages 5 and above)	26.2%	31.2%	31.4%	35.3%
Highest educational attainment (adults aged 25 and older)				
No high school diploma	15.6%	10.5%	5.9%	4.1%
High school diploma or equivalent	15.8%	12.2%	11.2%	6.4%
Less than 4 years of college (both persons with an associate degree or with a partially completed bachelor's degree)	14.3%	12.2%	10.7%	8.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	54.2%	65.1%	72.1%	81.1%

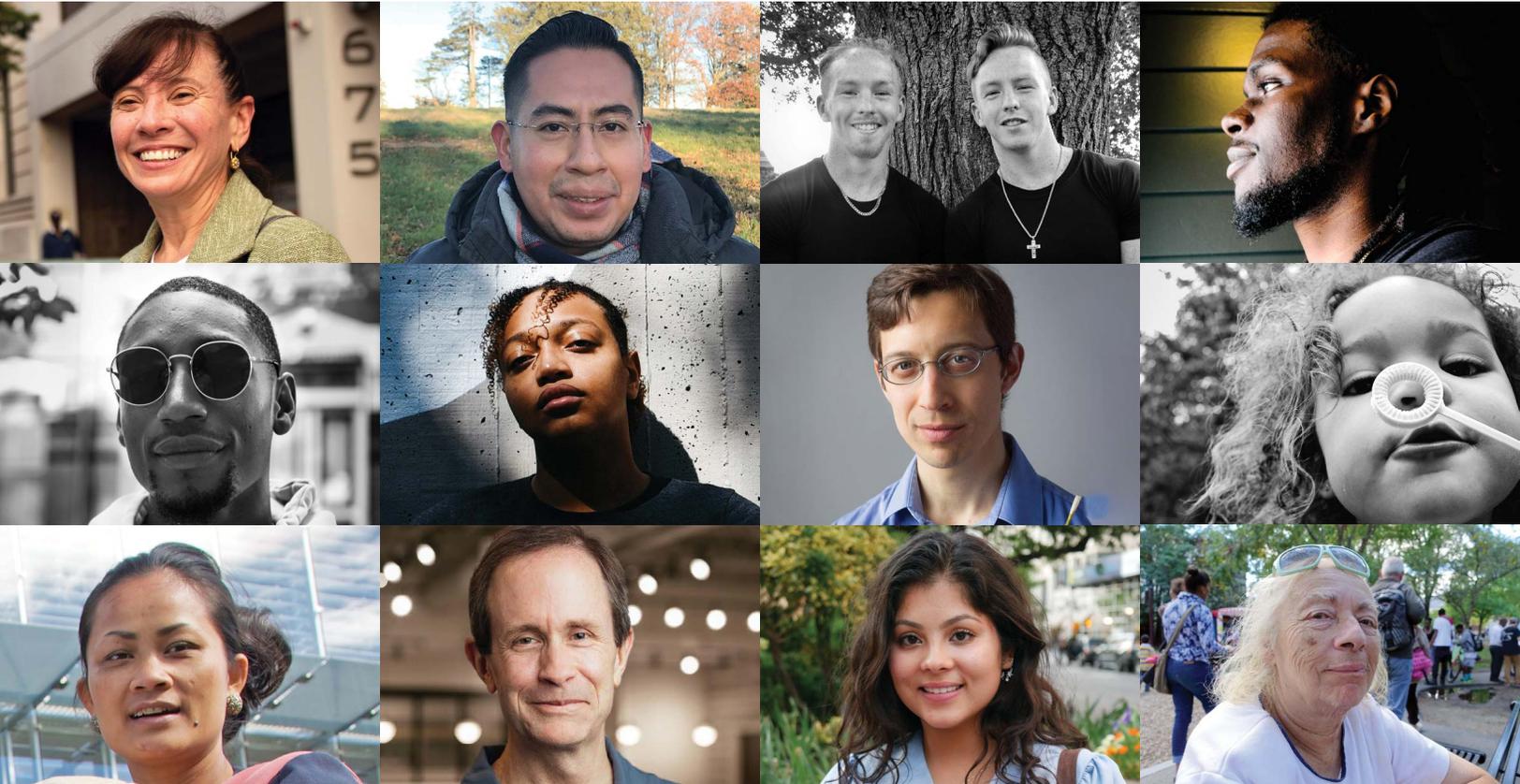
Sources: Community Development Department, City of Cambridge; 2011 Statistical Profile; MAPC analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Public Use Microdata Sample 2010–14. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates, 2006–2010, 2010–2014, 2011–2015.

⁵ “Group quarters population” refers to non-household residents living in institutional settings such as dormitories, nursing homes, or shelters.

Opposite page: The Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, one of four settlement houses in Cambridge, helps families meet their needs. *Photo by Lou Jones.*

Chapter 3: Cambridge by Quintiles

How the city looks across five income groups



Over the past several years, the U.S. has become acutely aware of the income inequality that exists between the wealthiest 1 percent and the rest of the population. While comparing these two groups reveals a stark picture of an important trend in the nation's social and economic life, it fails to capture the myriad real-life experiences of people and households across the income spectrum. Within the 99 percent are upper middle-class white-collar professionals, solidly middle-class couples who still struggle to pay the rent, lower-income graduate students with room to grow before hitting their full earning potential, and families with children living in extreme poverty.

Instead of dividing the population into two or three income brackets, then, this report explores a changing Cambridge through quintiles, or five equal shares of the total number of households, to better capture the diversity of the city's approximately 118,000 residents. For a better understanding of the city's households, the quintile data excludes students living in dormitories and others living in institutional settings. The report divides the remaining roughly 100,000 people into five groups by income, with each quintile representing about 20,000 people.

Above: A photo collage of Cambridge residents. Photos by Kristen Joy Emack, Jeffrey Blackwell, Sam Seidel, and Romana Vysatova; others courtesy of residents.

This chapter provides a profile of Cambridge's quintiles in 2018 across a broad set of demographic, housing, and economic characteristics, and compares them to the quintiles of roughly a decade ago. In reading these profiles, it is important to note that the data do not capture the trajectories of individual people or families over the past 10 years; rather, they provide snapshots of Cambridge at distinct points in time. The goal is to understand which groups have lost and which have gained, as well as how equity in Cambridge has changed during this boom period of innovation and growth.

"CAMBRIDGE HAS A LOT OF RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANTS AND IT FELT REALLY WELCOMING TO MY FAMILY WHEN WE CAME HERE FROM NEPAL. BUT GOING FORWARD WE CAN'T OVERLOOK SENIORS, CHILDREN, AND LOW-INCOME PEOPLE. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE CAMBRIDGE STAYS WELCOMING FOR EVERYONE."

— ABINA NEPAL, NONPROFIT PROFESSIONAL

QUINTILES AT A GLANCE

Exploring Cambridge across five income groups. A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population.

	 Income	 People & Households	 Housing & Community	 Education & Jobs
1 THE FIRST QUINTILE Most Ethnically Diverse Residents	Up to \$30K Avg \$13K	Fewer kids, more seniors, most racial diversity, most single-parent families	Cost-burdened renters and long-term residents	Lowest post-secondary credentialing, service sector jobs
2 THE SECOND QUINTILE Largest Share of Newcomers	\$30K to \$73K Avg \$50K	Most newcomer immigrants, fewer families with children	More recent movers, growing share of homeowners	Greatest increase in credentialing, most employed in education
3 THE MIDDLE QUINTILE Mobile Millennials	\$73K to \$119K Avg \$95K	Largest increase in racial diversity, mostly millennial	Highly mobile renters, unmarried couples and roommate households	More very highly educated adults, growing innovation workforce
4 THE FOURTH QUINTILE Cambridge's Innovation Workforce	\$119K to \$193K Avg \$151K	More double-income, no kids households	More renter households, more mid-term residents	Core of innovation workforce
5 THE TOP QUINTILE Where the Children Are	\$193K and up Avg \$343K	Most kids and workforce-aged adults, growing diversity	Majority homeowner, mostly mid- and long-term residents	Most highly educated, leading employment in management occupations

Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Note: The quintiles analyze people living in households and do not include the roughly 17,000 people living in group quarters, such as dormitories, nursing homes, shelters, and other institutional settings.

1

THE FIRST QUINTILE Most Ethnically Diverse Residents



A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population

Overview

The first 20 percent of Cambridge households in terms of income is the most racially and ethnically diverse. People in this quintile are more likely to be Black or older, long-term residents who live alone. They tend to be part of Cambridge’s service-sector workforce. The few children who remain in this group are very likely to be in single-parent households.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME UP TO:

\$30K

AVERAGE INCOME:

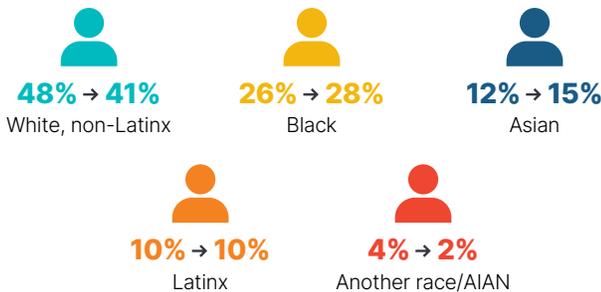
\$13K

People and Households (2009 → 2018)

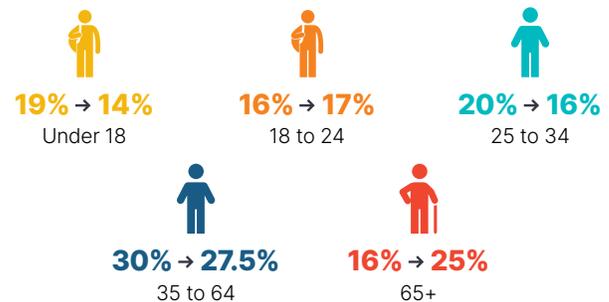
This is the only income group in the city where people of color are in the majority, with a slice of the pie growing from 52 percent to 59 percent over the decade. More than a quarter of this population is Black, and a full 40 percent of the city’s Black population is in this quintile. This income tier has gotten older over the past decade and includes fewer children, with 25 percent of the people in this quintile 65 or older, up significantly from 16 percent in 2009. The majority of households are single persons living alone. Children are disappearing faster here than in any other quintile, but of the remaining families with children, nearly 70 percent are headed by a single caregiver.

Over the past decade, the average household income for the first quintile increased by just 6 percent when adjusted for inflation. This is the lowest growth of any quintile.

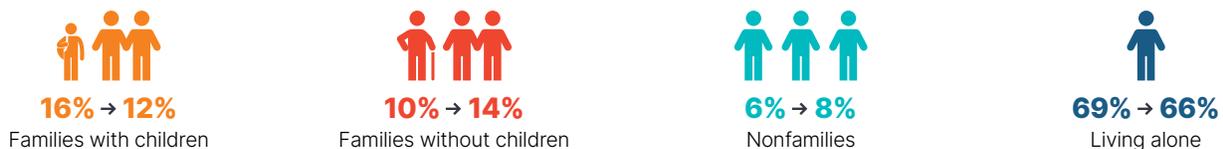
Race/Ethnicity: Increasing population of Black and Asian residents



Age: Fewer children, more seniors



Household Type: There are fewer families with children



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For more data, visit <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.

Housing and Community (2009 → 2018)

Most people in the first 20 percent are renters, although there has been a slight increase in those who own their homes free and clear. Given the high value of housing in Cambridge, this could indicate a low-income population with a relatively high net worth. Although the majority of these households pay half of their income or more for housing, the number spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent has fallen from 67 percent to 56.4 percent of renters and from nearly 80 percent to 67.7 percent of owners. Renters in this quintile are moving less often than they did a decade ago, and more than a third of them (up from a quarter) have lived in their present home for at least 10 years.

Tenure: More homes owned with no mortgage



Extreme Cost Burden (>50%): Fewer extremely cost-burdened households



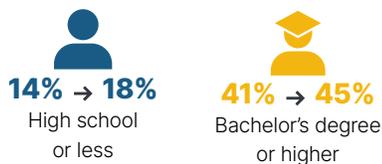
Stability: More long-term residents



Education and Jobs (2009 → 2018)

The past decade has seen an increase in less-educated adults: 18 percent in this quintile do not have a high school diploma, up from 14 percent. Moreover, fully half of working-age adults (25 to 64) without a post-secondary degree in Cambridge live in this quintile, up from 35 percent. In 2009, the largest share of working-aged adults in this quintile worked in education; now the dominant occupations are health care support and food service. Adults have the highest unemployment and the lowest labor-force participation rates. A full 54.5 percent are out of the labor force altogether.

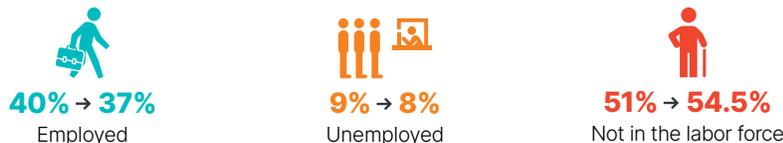
Educational Attainment: More than half of adults lack a bachelor's degree



Top Occupations: Core of frontline and essential service workers



Labor Force Participation: Fewer adults in the labor force



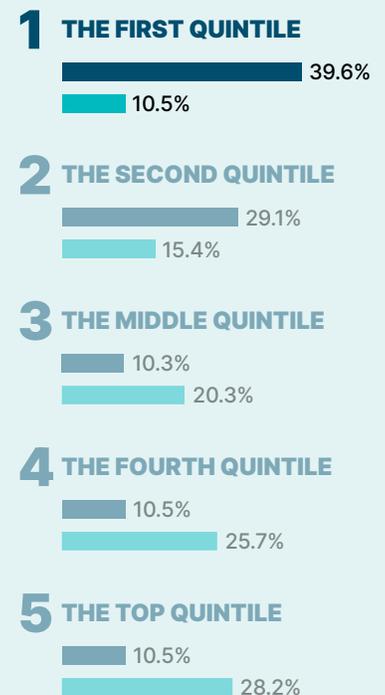
Neighborhoods with the greatest share of households in the first quintile:



The first quintile is the heart of Black Cambridge:

Nearly 40 percent of all Black Cambridge residents live in the first quintile, compared with just 10 percent of the white, non-Latinx population.

Distribution of Black and White Populations by Quintile, 2018



■ Black
■ White

2 THE SECOND QUINTILE Largest Share of Newcomers



A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population

Overview

The second 20 percent of households experienced the least change over the past decade in their overall demographic and housing profile, though this quintile remains the most varied in terms of its people and households. It includes single adults living alone, households without children, and lower-skilled workers who are becoming more credentialed by working on further degrees or certificates. Households in this quintile are highly mobile and more likely to be recent immigrants.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$30K to \$73K

AVERAGE INCOME:

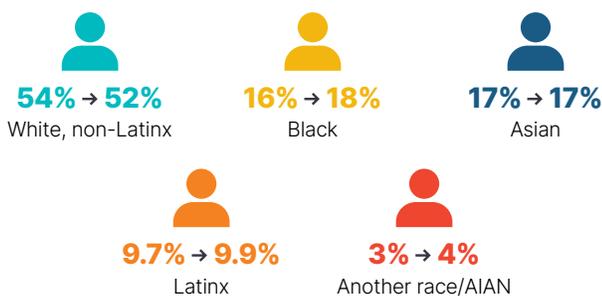
\$50K

People and Households (2009 → 2018)

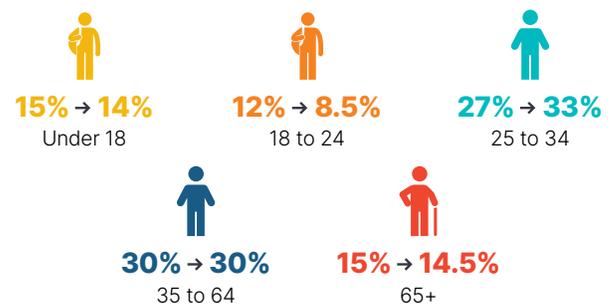
Though the second quintile remains majority white, close to half are now people of color. The largest generational shift in this quintile came with a slight increase in millennials aged 25 to 34; the group grew from 27 percent to 33 percent of the population. While 53 percent of households in the second quintile continue to be headed by a single person living alone, families with children declined from 18.6 percent to 13 percent of households over the past decade. Families with children in this quintile are more likely than they were a decade ago to be two-parent households: 62.3 percent of these families are headed by a married couple, up from 56.4 percent in 2009.

Households in the second quintile have seen the second-largest relative gains, with their average income up 23.5 percent and the top earners' incomes up 27 percent over the decade, when adjusted for inflation.

Race/Ethnicity: Least demographic change



Age: Fewer student-aged residents



Household Type: Fewer families with children



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For more data, visit <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.

Housing and Community (2009 → 2018)

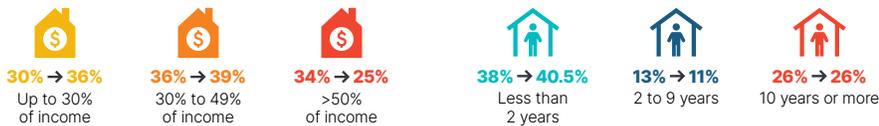
Households in this quintile have made income gains, and the number of households that own their homes outright has increased, but two-thirds of owners spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing. Income gains largely benefited homeowners rather than renters, as the share of cost-burdened owners fell from 61 to 45 percent. More than 40 percent of this quintile have lived in their current home less than two years. Among those who have moved in the past year, 35 percent moved from another state and a quarter from another country.

Tenure: More homes owned without a mortgage



Housing Costs as a Share of Income:

Declining cost burden



Lived in Current Home for:

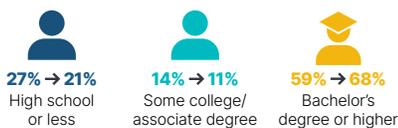
More recent movers

Education and Jobs (2009 → 2018)

The share of adults in this quintile with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 59 percent to 68 percent — nearly all attributable to more adults with a master's or higher degree. This quintile has the highest share of those employed in the non-profit sector, with 18 percent in education, 17 percent in the innovation cluster, and 10 percent in management.

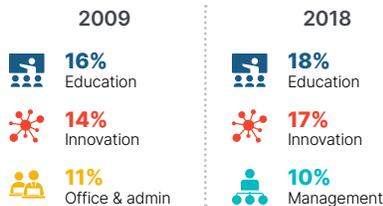
Educational Attainment:

Large increase in adults with at least a bachelor's degree



Top Occupations:

Only quintile with top employment in education



Employment Sector: Largest share of workers in the nonprofit sector



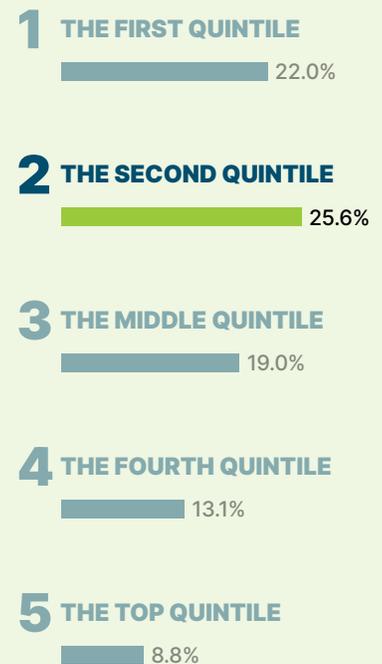
Neighborhoods with the greatest share of households in the second quintile:



The second quintile has the largest share of new immigrants.

Among Cambridge residents who moved to their home within the past year, this quintile has the greatest share who came from abroad.

Share of Population Recently Moved from Another Country, 2018



3

THE MIDDLE QUINTILE Mobile Millennials



A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population

Overview

The middle quintile, where millennial-age workers have overtaken older adults as the core demographic, is the heart of the new Cambridge. Still majority white, this quintile has increased in diversity more than any other. The majority of households are married couples, nonmarried partners, and adult roommates with no children — and nearly half of them have moved within the past two years. This quintile has experienced the most growth in workers employed in the innovation sector.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$73K to \$119K

AVERAGE INCOME:

\$95K

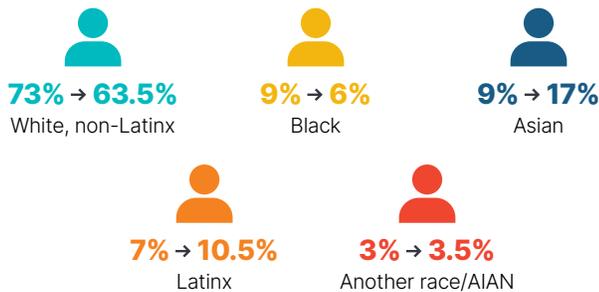
People and Households (2009 → 2018)

Though still majority white, the middle quintile experienced the largest increase in racial and ethnic diversity among all tiers over the past decade, with the percentage of people of color growing from 27.2 to 36.5. The Asian population nearly doubled, and the Latinx population increased as well, although the Black population declined. More than 40 percent of this quintile is between the ages of 25 and 34, making it the epicenter of the millennial workforce. This tier has the lowest percentage of children. In this quintile, 55 percent of households are families without children and nonfamily groups living together, up from 44 percent a decade ago.

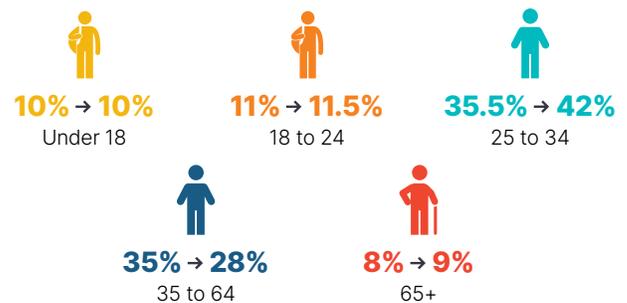
The average income of households in the middle quintile rose by 27.5 percent from 2009 to 2018, the greatest growth of any quintile.

Race/Ethnicity:

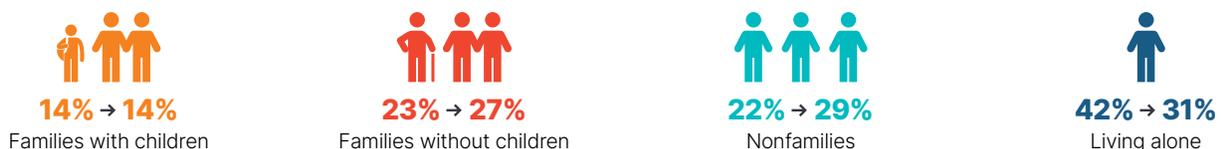
Quintile with the largest growth in racial and ethnic diversity



Age: Core of Cambridge's young workforce



Household Type: More roommate households and families without kids



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For more data, visit <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.

Housing and Community (2009 → 2018)

Renters in the middle quintile are far more cost-burdened than owners. Just over a quarter of renters pay less than 30 percent of their income for housing. Among owners, the opposite situation prevails, with nearly three-fourths putting less than 30 percent of their income toward housing. Residents in this quintile are highly mobile: 46 percent have lived in their current home for less than two years. Movers are likely to be from another country; 19 percent of those who moved within the past year came from outside the U.S. In fact, a fifth of those who recently moved from abroad are in this quintile.

Tenure:

More renter households



Cost Burden (>30%):

Far fewer cost-burdened households



Lived in Current Home for:

Decline in long-term housing-stable residents



Movers Coming from:

More recent movers coming from another country

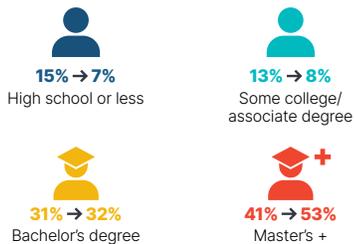


Education and Jobs (2009 → 2018)

High educational attainment is more crucial to this quintile than to any other. A decade ago, more than 15 percent of adults in this group held a high school diploma or less. Today, that population is below 7 percent. While nearly all working-age adults in this quintile are employed, the nature of their work has shifted over the past decade, with the share of self-employed workers declining and the share of non-profit workers falling more than in any other tier. This quintile has experienced the greatest change in occupations from the growth of the innovation economy.

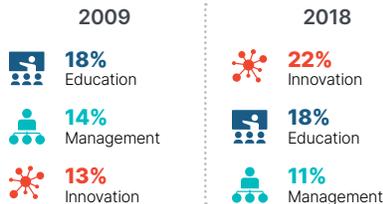
Educational Attainment:

Major increase in very highly educated adults

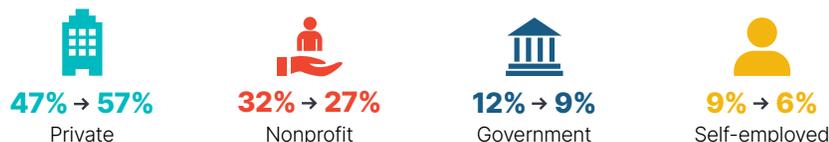


Top Occupations:

Most growth in innovation-sector employment



Employment Sector: Large increase in private-sector employment



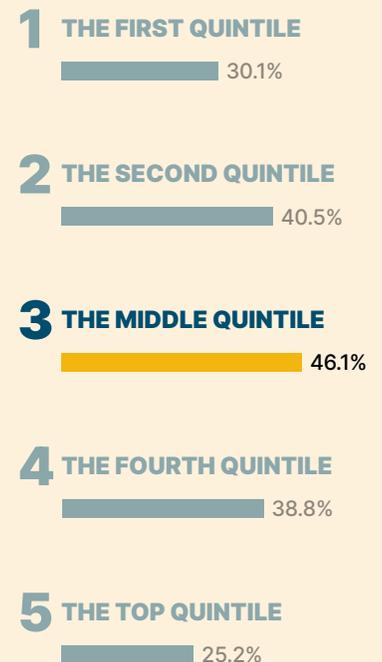
Neighborhoods with the greatest share of households in the middle quintile:



The middle quintile is the most mobile.

Almost half of all people living in the middle 20 percent of households moved into their current home less than two years ago.

Share of Residents Living in Current Home for Less than Two Years, 2018



4 THE FOURTH QUINTILE Cambridge's Innovation Workforce



A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population

Overview

The fourth 20 percent of the population by income looks much like it did a decade ago, with higher-income households of predominantly white, well-educated, mid-career professionals. But subtle differences reflect the city's broader changes: the loss of families with children has increased the number of "double-income, no kids" households; middle-skilled adults have been replaced by those with higher credentials; and, most notably, the fourth quintile is now the heart of the innovation-economy workforce.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$119K to \$193K

AVERAGE INCOME:

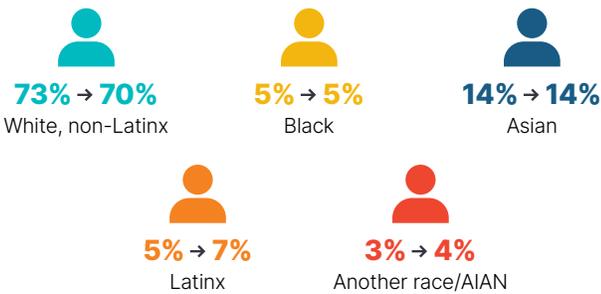
\$151K

People and Households (2009 → 2018)

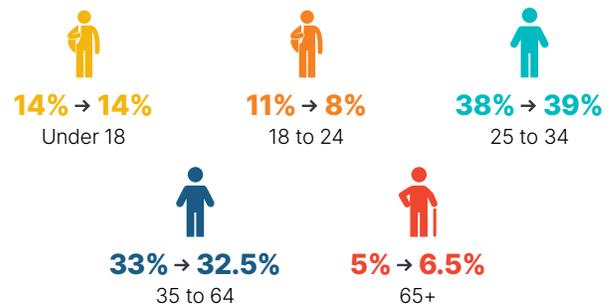
The fourth quintile remains overwhelmingly white. Black and Latinx residents are significantly underrepresented, comprising just 5.2 percent and 6.7 percent of the population, respectively. Although this quintile has seen an uptick in millennials aged 25 to 34, mid-career and older adults in the workforce nevertheless make up nearly a third of the population. The share of households with children decreased, while the "double-income, no kids" households rose. In fact, nearly 60 percent of all households are either married couples with no children or nonfamily households not living alone, including unmarried partners and adult roommates.

Over the past decade, the average household income for the fourth quintile of households increased by 23 percent.

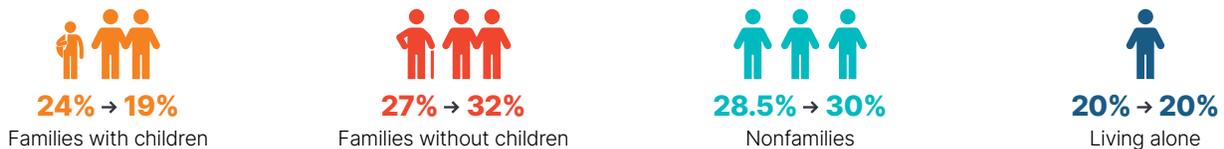
Race/Ethnicity: Relatively little change in racial/ethnic diversity



Age: Mostly young workforce



Household Type: More married couples without children



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For more data, visit <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.

Housing and Community (2009 → 2018)

The fourth quintile saw the rise of the high-income renter household and a decreased cost burden for both renters and owners. Household stability is greater than in the lower tiers, with a plurality having lived in their current home two to 10 years (although fewer have lived in their home 10 years or more). Among recent movers, the share from another location in Massachusetts decreased, although this was partially offset by an increase in movers coming from other states.

Tenure:

Increase in renter households



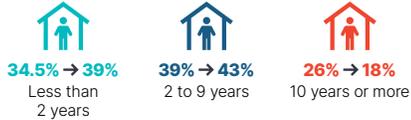
Cost Burden (>30%):

Very low levels of housing cost burden



Lived in Current Home for:

More mid-term housing stability



Movers Coming from:

Fewer local movers

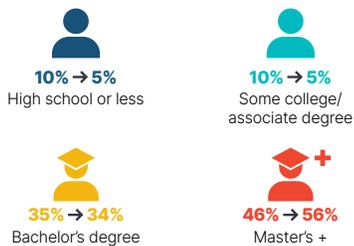


Education and Jobs (2009 → 2018)

The fourth quintile lost most of its low- and middle-skilled adults, whose place has been taken by those with higher educational attainment levels; the share of fourth-quintile adults with a master's degree or higher rose from 45.6 percent to 56.3 percent over the decade. Most workers are in the private sector. Workers in nonprofits increased slightly; workers in government decreased. Nearly a third of working adults are in innovation-cluster occupations. More than a third of all innovation economy workers are in this quintile.

Educational Attainment:

Sharp increase in highly educated adults



Top Occupations:

Highest employment in innovation occupations



Employment Sector: Largest drop in adults working in government



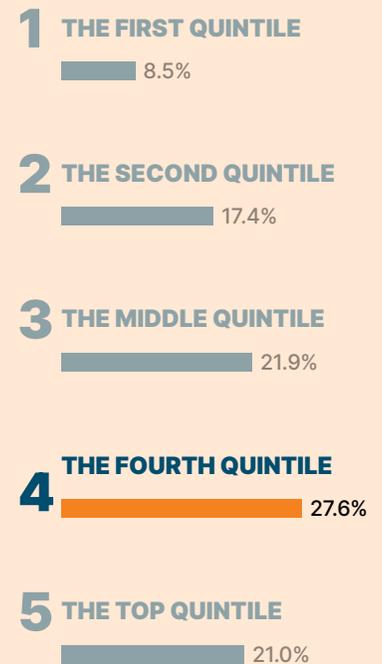
Neighborhoods with the greatest share of households in the fourth quintile:



The fourth quintile is the core of Cambridge's innovation economy workforce.

Nearly a third of working adults in the fourth quintile — more than in any other tier — are employed in innovation-cluster occupations.

Share of Working Adults Employed in Innovation Occupations, 2018



5 THE TOP QUINTILE

Where the Children Are



A quintile refers to one-fifth of the population

Overview

The former stereotype of the middle-class household — white-collar professionals working in finance, business, and managerial occupations and living in two-parent families with children — has come to reflect the top quintile of households in Cambridge over the past decade. These highest-earning households are more likely to have children, be longer-term homeowners, and be self-employed than any other quintile. They work in top-tier management, finance, and legal occupations.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

\$193K and higher

AVERAGE INCOME:

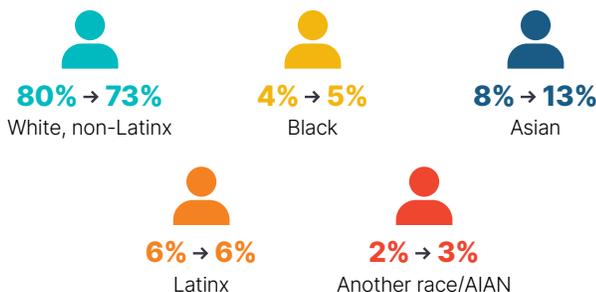
\$343K

People and Households (2009 → 2018)

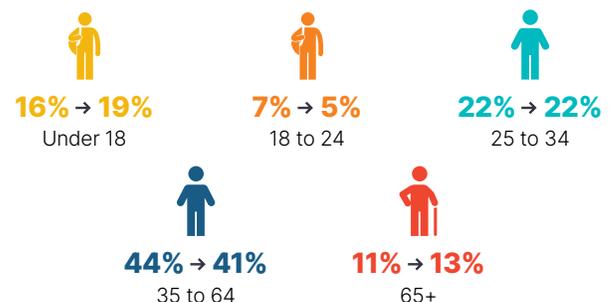
The top 20 percent of households has become more diverse over the past decade, reflecting a growing Asian population and a slight increase in the Black population. More children live in the top 20 percent of households than a decade ago. In fact, one-third of all children, including nearly 40 percent of those 5 and under, live in this quintile. Households without children remain the majority, but there has been an uptick in families with children from 24 percent to 31 percent of all households. The majority of these families are married-couple households — and nearly 40 percent of all married couples with children are in the top 20 percent of households, compared with nearly 30 percent a decade ago.

The average income for the top quintile is now more than 25 times the average income for the first quintile.

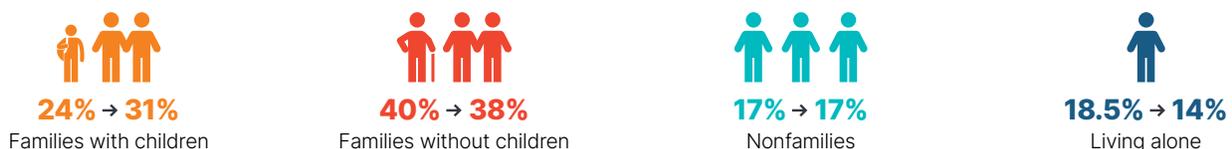
Race/Ethnicity: Largest growth in Asian population



Age: Largest growth in children



Household Type: More families with children



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. For more data, visit <https://cambridgecf.org/ei-report/>.

Housing and Community (2009 → 2018)

The top fifth of households are overwhelmingly homeowners, although the share of high-income renters in this quintile has grown dramatically over the past decade. Nearly all households pay less than 30 percent of their income for housing. This quintile is the core of housing-stable Cambridge, but there has been an uptick in more mobile, newcomer households, with the share who have lived in their current home less than two years increasing from 16.9 percent to 25.2 percent. Nevertheless, the top quintile has the highest rate of housing stability. Only 15 percent of residents moved within the past year, compared with 25 percent citywide.

Tenure: Majority homeowners but increasingly renter households



Lived in Current Home for:

Mostly long-term residents but growth in recent movers



Movers Coming from:

Most likely to be local movers

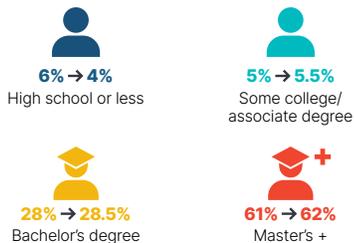


Education and Jobs (2009 → 2018)

Working-age adults in this quintile are Cambridge's most educated: 90 percent hold at least a bachelor's degree, and 62 percent hold a master's or higher. This quintile is the most likely to be self-employed. Twelve percent of working-age adults in the top quintile are self-employed, and more than a third of all self-employed workers in Cambridge are part of this quintile. Management occupations are the most common, followed closely by jobs in the innovation cluster, while occupations in business and finance have overtaken those in education among workers in this quintile.

Educational Attainment:

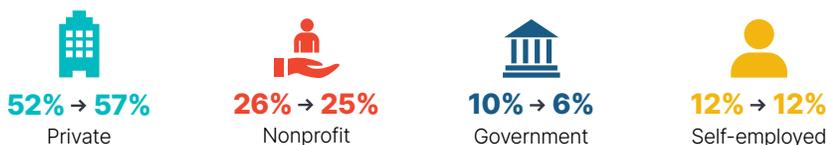
Very highly educated with little change



Top Occupations: Only quintile with top employment in management



Employment Sector: Relatively little change in employment sector profile



Neighborhoods with the greatest share of households in the top quintile:



The top quintile is where the children are.

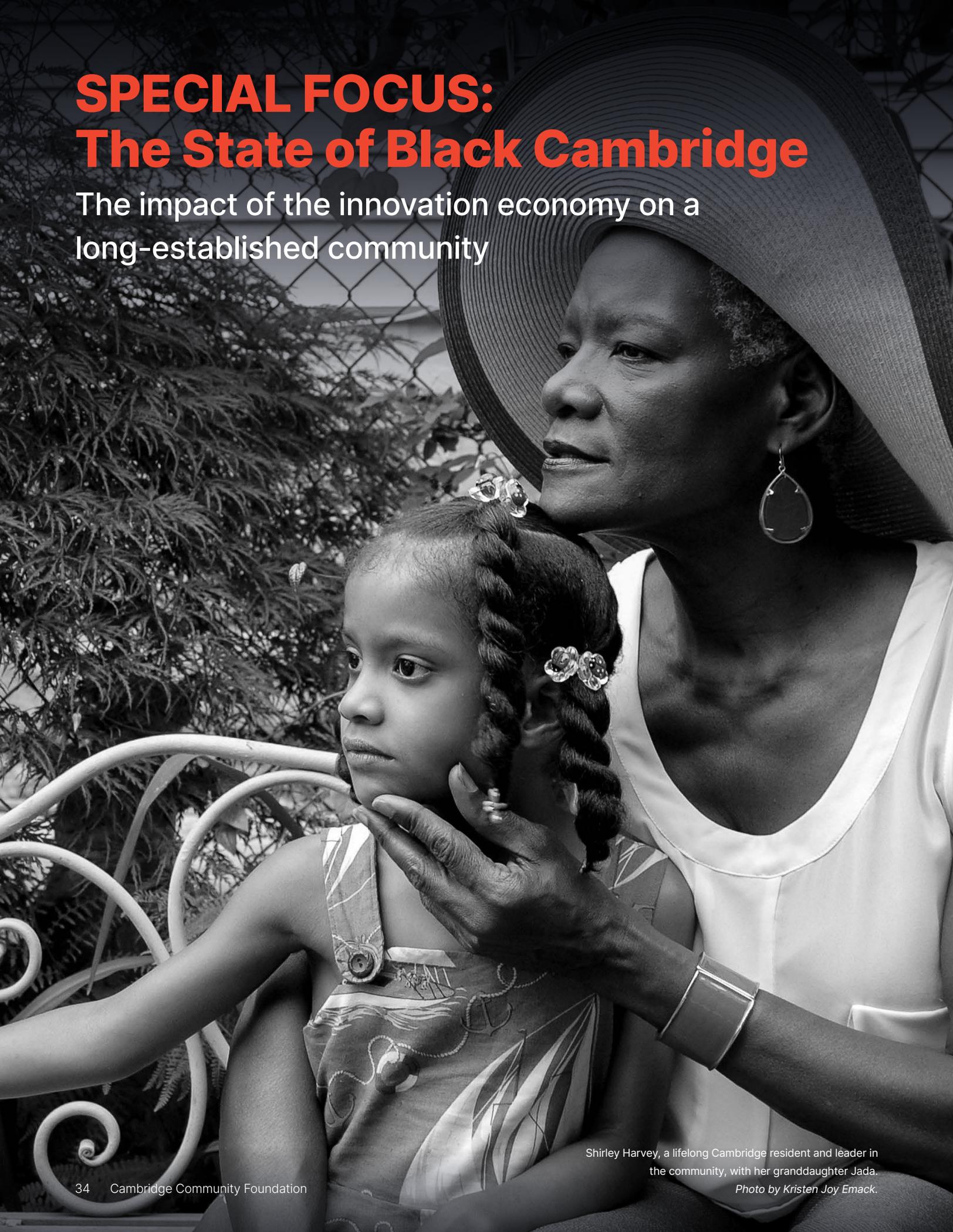
Nearly a third of children under 18 live in the top 20 percent of households, up from a fifth a decade ago.

Distribution of Child Population by Quintile, 2018



SPECIAL FOCUS: **The State of Black Cambridge**

The impact of the innovation economy on a long-established community



Shirley Harvey, a lifelong Cambridge resident and leader in the community, with her granddaughter Jada.

Photo by Kristen Joy Emack.

Black people have lived in this city since the late 1630s, when Cambridge was the “New Towne” across the river from Boston. Many were enslaved in Massachusetts until 1783, but the story of Black Cambridge is not simply about slavery; it also includes interaction and cultural exchange with Indigenous people. By the time the Civil War was over and the rest of the country had caught up with abolition, a Black middle class had emerged in Cambridge that included educators, businessmen, lecturers, and authors, as well as everyday residents who were building community through their churches, select small businesses, and fraternal orders like the Elks and Masons. An extraordinary — for the time — number of African Americans held appointed or elected positions, including common councilors, the fire chief, a city medical officer, a U.S. attorney, and others, from the 1870s through about 1900, when machine politics geared up and Woodrow Wilson segregated the federal service.

By the 1920s, Black residents — consisting not only of African Americans but also a large influx of Barbadians and Jamaicans who came seeking jobs — made up nearly 5 percent of Cambridge’s population. They resided largely in the lower Port neighborhood, in Central and Porter Squares, and along Walden Street between Richdale Avenue and Mead Street. The ensuing decades brought disruptive government-enforced housing segregation, including the 1938 razing of a low-income tenement neighborhood. In its place, two low-income housing developments were built side by side in the late 1930s–early 1940s, and they practiced segregation in housing assignments, with Newtowne Court primarily for white and Washington Elms for Black residents. As for the practice of redlining — the Federal Housing Administration’s refusal to insure mortgages in or near African American neighborhoods — it isn’t clear whether this widespread practice had as damaging an effect in Cambridge as it did elsewhere. In fact, Black home ownership was relatively high for a time, with many middle-class Black families owning their homes and establishing strong communities especially along Western and Concord Avenues.

Home Ownership and Security

Policies that hampered home ownership in the past — along with dramatically rising prices since the turn of the 21st century, which motivated some longtime residents to sell and often prevented new middle-class Black families



MARIA BALDWIN

(1856–1922)

Teacher and master, Agassiz School, 1889–1922



CLEMENT MORGAN

(1859–1929)

First African American Cambridge Alderman, 1897–1899

At the turn of the 20th century, Black Cantabrigians were part of an emerging middle class and contributed to a strong sense of community. *Photos courtesy of Cambridge Historical Commission.*

from buying — are key impediments to the long-term economic security of this significant group of Cantabrigians. Today, about 20 percent of Cambridge’s Black population are homeowners, as compared with nearly 36 percent of all residents. Of the city’s 16,529 owner-occupied housing units, about 6 percent are owned by Black residents, while a whopping 79 percent are owned by whites. In addition, disparities in K–12 educational outcomes suggest continuing limits on Black participation in an economy that demands high levels of education. The community is further hampered by the declining numbers of those aged 17 to 34, who will dominate the city’s future workforce. Black participation in Cambridge’s innovation economy remains lower than that of other demographics, and as a consequence, this group has seen little benefit from the developments that constitute the “new Cambridge.”

Simultaneously, there are those who are succeeding, as evident from the Black middle-quintile and modestly increasing upper-quintile populations — which raises important questions. What is working for those who are succeeding? How it can be replicated? And what must we do to ensure that all children are equipped to remain in Cambridge as part of this booming innovation economy?

A closer look at the state of Black Cambridge today — at people, families, and households and their access to the benefits Cambridge offers — reveals how recent economic gains and losses have altered this long-established community.

People and Households

Black Cambridge itself is ethnically diverse; while more than 80 percent of the people in this group identify as Black alone, 10.4 percent identify as both Black and Latinx, and 9 percent as “multiracial, including Black.” Moreover, about 37 percent of Black Cantabrigians were born outside of the U.S., coming mostly from African, Central American, and Caribbean nations.

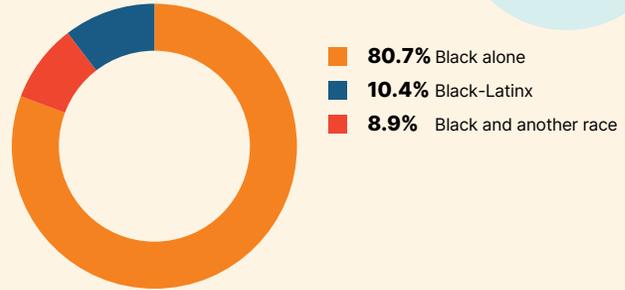
Compared with the city as a whole, Black Cambridge⁶ is underrepresented in the core millennial demographic. While 18- to 34-year-olds comprise nearly half the total population of Cambridge and account for almost all of the growth, just 10.5 percent of that group and 8.4 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds identify as Black.

Compared with just 43 percent of all Cambridge households, nearly 53 percent of all Black households consist of families, as opposed to roommates, unmarried couples, or individuals living alone — higher than any other group. However, 31.5 percent of Black families with children are headed by a single parent — more than three times the rate of families citywide.

Layah and Kayla Bernard and Apple Emack. Photo by Kristen Joy Emack.



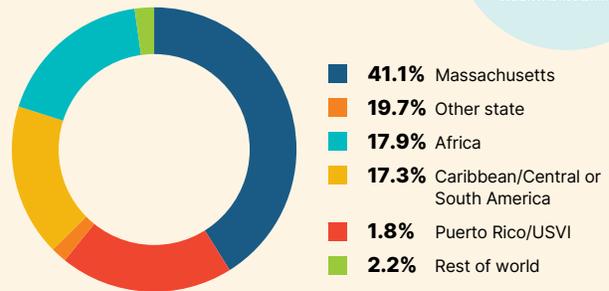
Cambridge's Black Population by Detailed Race/Ethnicity



20% of Black Cambridge residents are multiracial/multiethnic

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

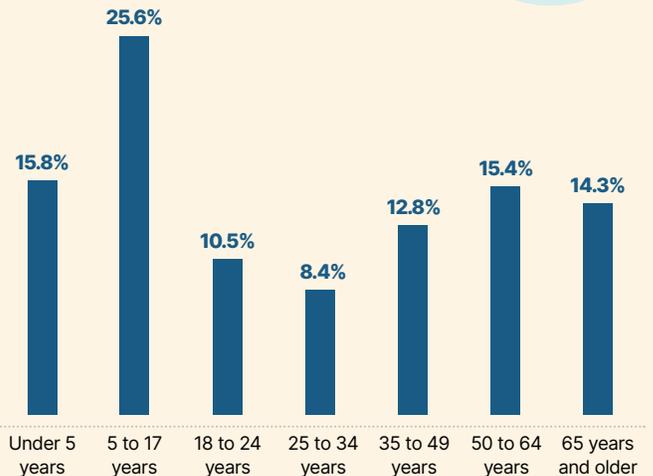
Black Cambridge by Place of Birth



59% of Black Cambridge residents were born outside of Massachusetts

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Black Population as a Share of Age Group



25.6% of school-aged children are Black

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁶ Because in this Special Focus we have expanded on the standard U.S. Census racial category “Black/African American” to include the population of residents who identify as Black alone and as Black in combination with another race or Latinx ethnicity, these figures may differ slightly from those in other chapters.

Housing and Community

Like all Cambridge households, the vast majority of Black households consist of renters. However, as the Black population of renters declined, the share of households that are owner-occupied increased from about 11 percent to just over 20 percent, while most other racial groups remained the same.

Black residents are among Cambridge's longest-term residents. More than a third have lived in their current home for a decade or more, as compared with a quarter of non-Latinx white, 16 percent of Latinx, and less than 10 percent of Asian residents.

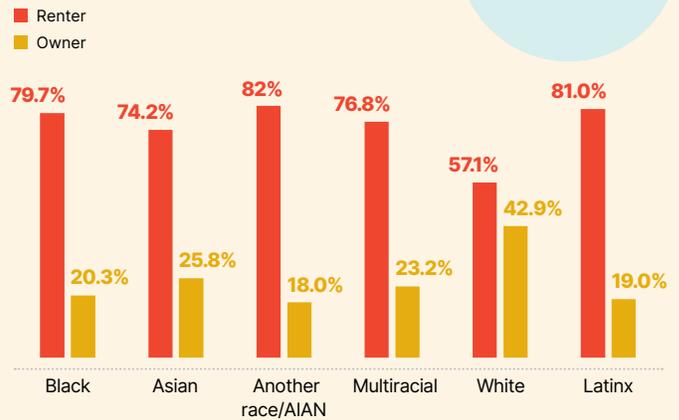
Cambridge's Black community has significant housing stability, deep roots, and long-term investment in its city. It has the lowest rate of newcomers, with just 11 percent having moved into their current home in the past year, compared with 24 percent of white, 31.5 percent of Latinx, and nearly 35 percent of Asian residents.

Among both renters and owners, Black households are Cambridge's most cost-burdened. Nearly a third of Black homeowners pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing, compared with 21 percent of white, 19 percent of Latinx, and 13 percent of Asian homeowners. More than 55 percent of Black renters pay more than a third of their income toward rent, compared with 47 percent of Asian, 42 percent of Latinx, and 35 percent of white renters.

"UNFORTUNATELY, I AM PROBABLY ONE OF THE VERY FEW PEOPLE OF COLOR THAT GREW UP IN CAMBRIDGE IN THE '70S AND '80S WHO WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BUY A HOME HERE. NONE OF MY FRIENDS LIVE HERE AND THAT'S MOSTLY DUE TO THE ISSUE OF AFFORDABILITY."

— TY BELLITTI, LOCAL BUSINESS OWNER

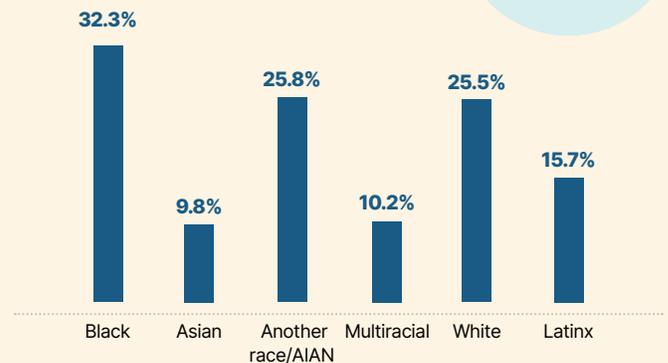
Housing Tenure by Race/Ethnicity



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

80%
of Black households are renters

Share of Residents Living in Current Home for 10 Years or More



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

1 in 3
Black residents has lived in their home for over a decade

Ty Bellitti. Photo by Lou Jones.



Education and Workforce

Perhaps nowhere is the equity gap more pronounced than in educational attainment. A full 80 percent of Cambridge adults hold at least a bachelor's degree and more than 60 percent hold a master's or higher. And yet, among adults aged 25 to 64, just over a third of Black residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. More than 44 percent have a high school diploma or less, compared with 26 percent of Latinx, less than 10 percent of white, and less than 5 percent of Asian adults.

Disparities in education credentials translate to a striking gap in access to the innovation economy. While 22 percent of working-aged Cambridge residents are employed in innovation-related occupations, just 4.6 percent of Black Cantabrigians are — a far lower rate than the 13.7 percent for Latinx, 20.6 percent for white, and 30.6 percent for Asian residents.

"CHILDREN CAN LOSE HOPE VERY YOUNG WHEN EXPECTATIONS OF THEM ARE LOW. OUR WHITE SUPREMACIST CULTURE IS FULL OF MESSAGING THAT OUR CHILDREN SEE AND FEEL. CAMBRIDGE FAILS TO WELCOME OR PREPARE BLACK AND BROWN CHILDREN FOR AP CLASSES."

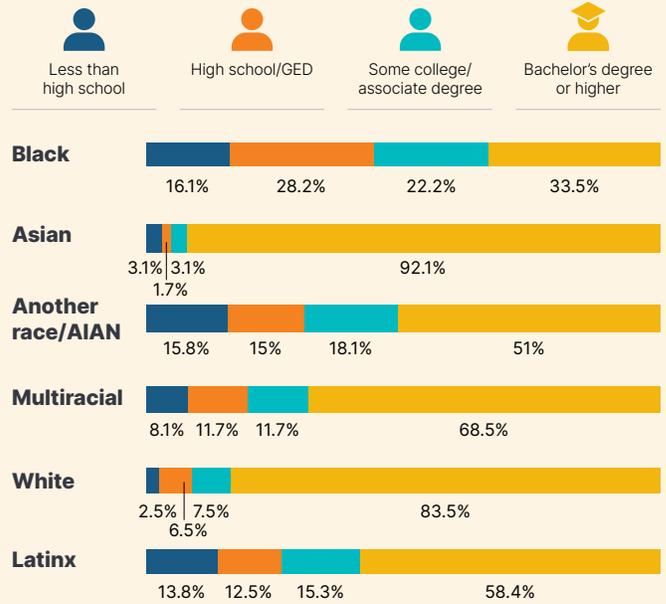
**— SUSAN RICHARDS,
FIFTH GENERATION CANTABRIGIAN**

Longtime Cambridge resident Susan Richards. Photo by Lou Jones.



Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity, Adults 25 and Older

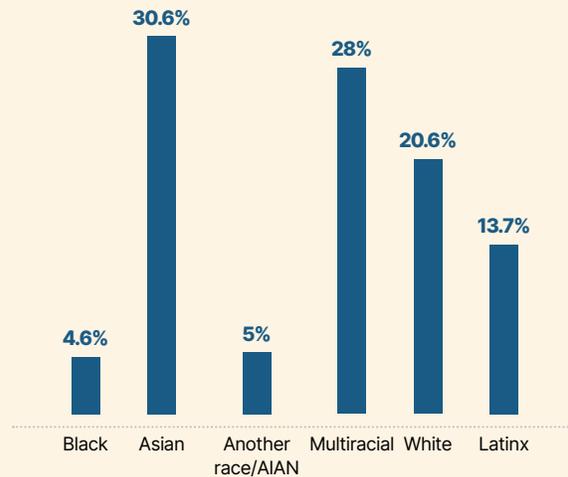
33.5%
of Black adults have a bachelor's degree or higher



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Share of Working-Age Adults Employed in Innovation Occupations by Race/Ethnicity

Less than **5%**
of Black adults work in the innovation economy



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Changing Black Cambridge

Highlights of a decade of change in Cambridge's Black community

ETHNICITY

Growing Black/Latinx Population

Share of Black residents who also identify as Latinx

5.9% → 10.4%

2009 2018

AGE

Fewer children, more seniors

Under 18

28.5% → 21.6%

2009 2018

65 and older

8% → 12.6%

2009 2018

TENURE

Greater share of homeowners

Owned with a mortgage/
Owned free and clear

18% → 22.4%

2009 2018

RECENT MOVERS

More recent immigrants

Share of movers within the last year coming from another country

7.6% → 11.4%

2009 2018

TOP OCCUPATIONS

Education and sales replaced by transportation and management

2009

11.6% Office & administration

11.1% Sales

10.8% Education

2018

12% Office & administration

11% Transportation

10.8% Management

PLACE OF BIRTH

Fewer foreign-born

Share of Black residents born in another country

42.6% → 37.4%

2009 2018

HOUSEHOLDS

Fewer families with kids, more nonfamily roommates

Families with kids

61.7% → 42.8%

2009 2018

Nonfamily, not alone

8.1% → 20.2%

2009 2018

RESIDENTIAL STABILITY

More long-term residents

Share of residents living in current home for more than 10 years

24.6% → 32.3%

2009 2018

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Higher post-secondary credentials

Share of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher

30.6% → 33.5%

2009 2018

NEIGHBORHOODS

with the greatest share of Black residents



The Port: 22.9%



North Cambridge: 22.7%



Strawberry Hill: 17.4%

Lt. Col. Enoch Woodhouse participates in a Tech Goes Home program.

Photo by Karina Hathaway.

Sources: 2005-2009 and 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.



A Time for Change: The Future of Black Cambridge

The future of Black Cambridge, and the future of Cambridge as a whole, will be determined by how well our children fare. In many cases, the patterns of inequities mirror those that have played out citywide over the past decade.

Cambridge's Black student population has declined as a share of total enrollment. Over the past decade, enrollment in Cambridge Public Schools has grown by 20 percent — from 5,950 in 2010 to 7,091 in 2020. But in that same period, the share of students who identify as Black fell from 33.6 percent to 22.6 percent, suggesting a population in decline.

1,600

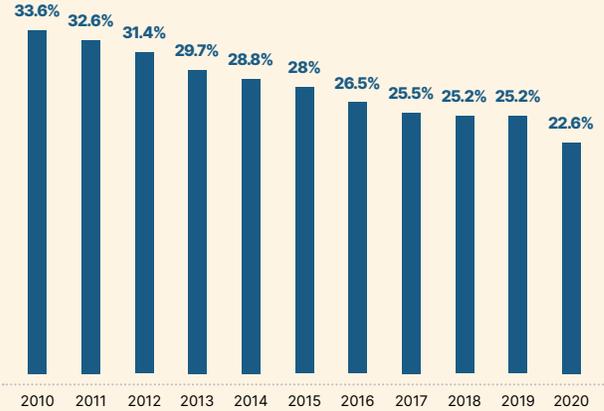
BLACK STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN 2020, DOWN FROM 2,000 IN 2010



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Black Cambridge Public Schools Enrollment, 2010–2020

23%
of CPS students are Black



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Above: Ashley Herring's backyard, a co-op for Black and multiracial youth in North Cambridge, is a place where youth can learn and lead through art, discussion, and mentoring. It is one of many after-school programs that support the success of Black youth. Photo by Lou Jones.

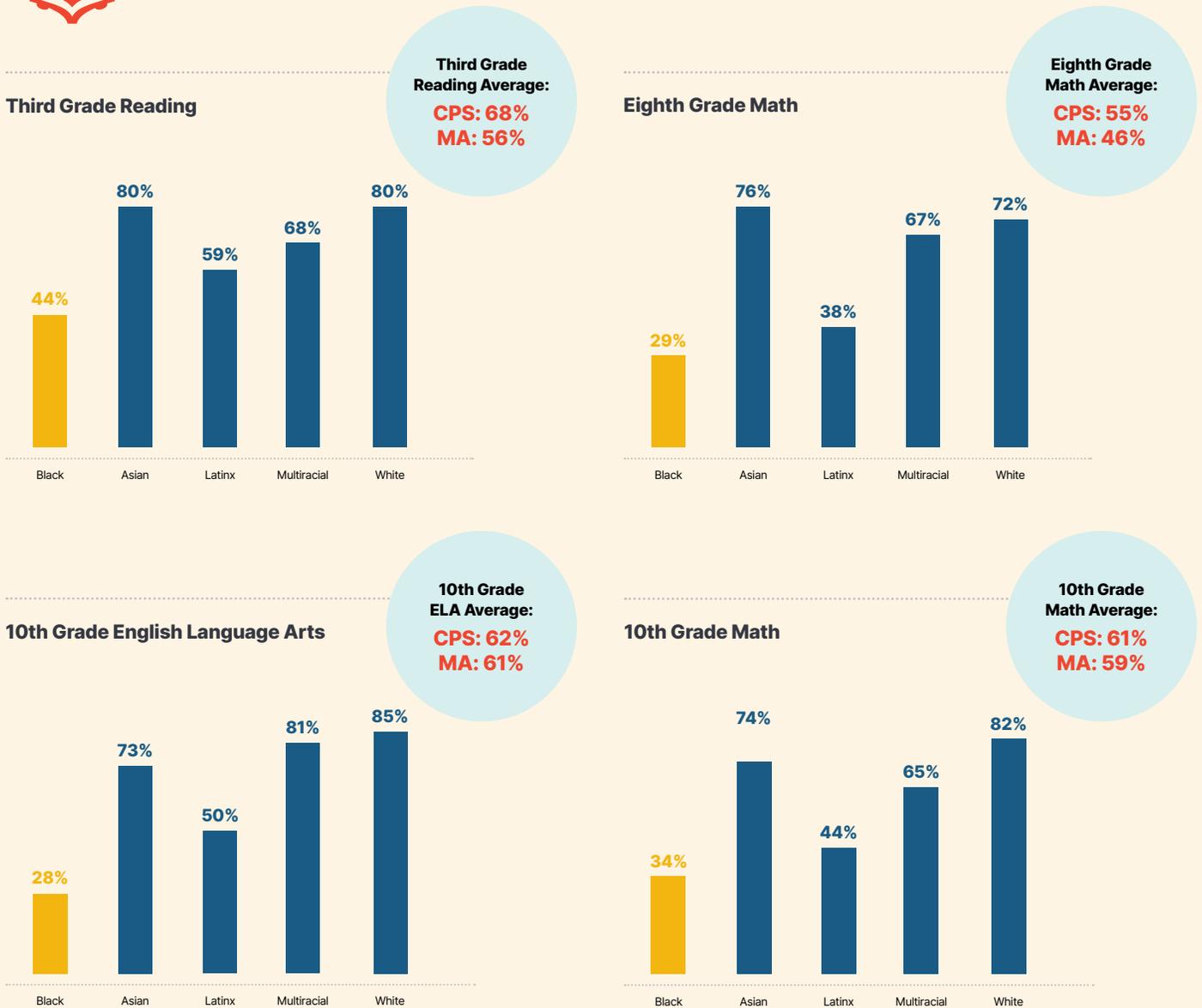
Racial/ethnic opportunity gaps persist throughout the K–12 education pipeline. There is a persistent gap among students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations. In third-grade reading, 44 percent of Black students achieved benchmark MCAS scores, meaning they met or exceeded expectations for their grade level, compared with 59 percent of Latinx students and 80 percent of their white and Asian peers.

By eighth grade, the opportunity gap widens, with 29 percent of Black students meeting or exceeding expectations in math compared with 38 percent of Latinx, 72 percent of white, and 76 percent of Asian students.

The pattern continues in high school, with 28 percent of Black students meeting or exceeding expectations in English language arts and 34 percent achieving this benchmark in math, compared with around 60 percent of their peers.



Cambridge Public Schools Share of Students Meeting or Exceeding MCAS Benchmark Scores by Race/Ethnicity, 2019



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

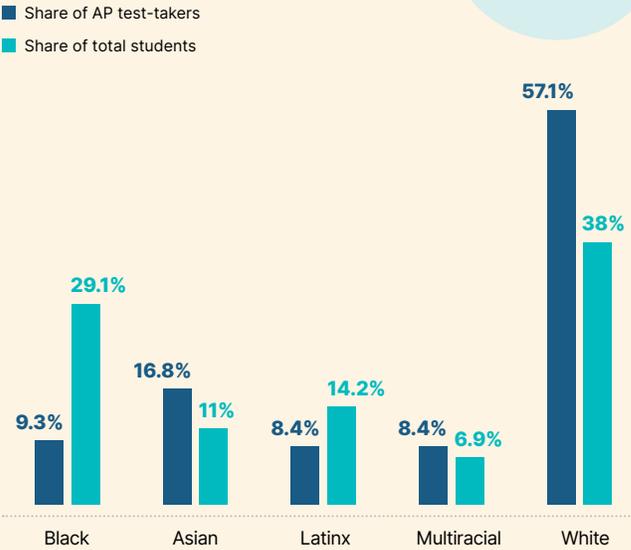
Gaps in college readiness, enrollment, and completion point to long-term racial equity gaps in Cambridge.

The logical outcome of the K–12 achievement gaps is that college is not equally attainable by all. Overall participation in advanced placement (AP) courses — a key indicator of college readiness — among Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) students has grown over the decade. In 2009, 176 students at CRLS, the only traditional public high school in the city, took AP tests; by 2019 that number had more than doubled, to 433, with a marginal increase in the number of Black CRLS test-takers. However, just under half of Black test-takers scored 3 or higher, translating to potential college credit, compared with 72 percent of Latinx, 74 percent of Asian, and more than 88 percent of white test-takers.

If education is the great equalizer, the current gaps in college readiness, enrollment, and completion among Black students in Cambridge are of particular concern. They point to the need for additional education support if today’s children — many of whose families have been in Cambridge for many generations — will be able to live as adults in the city where they grew up.

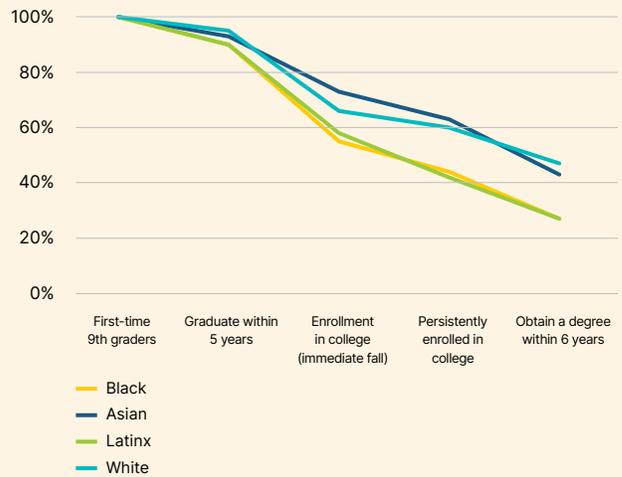
40 of 433
CRLS AP
test-takers were
Black students

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School AP Test-Takers by Race/Ethnicity, 2019



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Class of 2011 Cohort Six-Year Post-Secondary Outcomes by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.



Left: Google and Facebook partnered with the Cambridge Community Foundation to put laptops into the hands of low-income students and workers through the Tech-cellerate program. Photo by Romana Vysatova.



Black talent is moving out of Cambridge.

When he was in sixth grade, Tevin Charles's teacher jokingly advised him to buy property in Cambridge right away if he wanted to live here when he grew up. Last year, when he turned 25, he left the Port neighborhood, where he had been born and raised, for California and a more manageable cost of living.

There he found a market for his successful clothing line, Yungsurfgod, and for the skills in videography, audio engineering, and podcast recording he had picked up at the Loop Lab, a Central Square nonprofit.

But home is home, and with his first child just born, Tevin has come back. He says he sees two Cambridges today — “the new Cambridge of high-rise buildings, tech companies, and tech workers, and an old Cambridge that is invisible to newcomers and is rapidly disappearing.”

He's working in Cambridge now but still can't afford to live here. Tevin is one of many examples of talented Black youth who have become successful and moved out over the decades. We're losing the next generation of Black homeowners, civic leaders, business owners, educators, and role models in our community.

Chapter 4: A Cross-Quintile Summary

Very different incomes mean very different lives



The Haitian folkloric dance company Jean Appolon Expressions in Starlight Square. Photo by Lou Jones.

This fine-grained view of Cambridge reveals the impact of far-reaching economic change, as an old city dominated by venerable educational institutions becomes a new city with a cutting-edge economic base. In the case of Cambridge, the new has emerged from the old, with higher education in science, engineering, and advanced technology giving birth to industries that attract an increasingly young, mobile, and highly educated workforce. The ripples of this economic change can be felt well beyond the workplace, in the areas of income, housing affordability, racial makeup, and educational attainment.

Income

Among the most striking findings of this report are the income differences that mark Cambridge today. While the highest-income quintile accounts for 51 percent of the total earned income in the city, the lowest-income quintile shares just 2.2 percent of the city's total earned income. With an average income of \$13,280, households in the first quintile earn nearly \$330,000 less than households in the top quintile, which have an average income of \$343,190.

"WE NEED TO REINVEST IN LOCAL ART AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES AROUND ART. CAMBRIDGE ALWAYS WAS VIBRANT AND HAD A BIT OF AN EDGE TO IT. IT HAS THIS FEELING OF POSSIBILITY. A LOT OF COLLABORATION AND A LOT OF ART IS HAPPENING IN THIS SMALL SPACE."

— JACKIE O'RILEY, DANCER

Age Groups

The quintiles reveal details of the "new Cambridge," a place with a booming millennial population, a stagnant and falling under-18 population, a mature adult workforce that tends toward the upper tiers, and an elder population divided into those with income and those without.

- More children today reside in wealthier households than a decade ago: More than 30 percent of Cambridge's **children live in the top quintile of households**, compared with 24.5 percent in 2009. At the same time, the share of children in the bottom tier fell from 20 percent to 15.7 percent. Just under 14 percent live in the middle tier, a proportion unchanged over the decade.
- The young-adult workforce comprises the middle and upper quintiles: **Over 40 percent** of the middle quintile is **between the ages of 25 and 34**.
- **Seniors are highly polarized:** Roughly a quarter of Cambridge residents 65 and older are in the highest-income quintile, while more than 30 percent are in the lowest, up from 25 percent of seniors a decade ago.

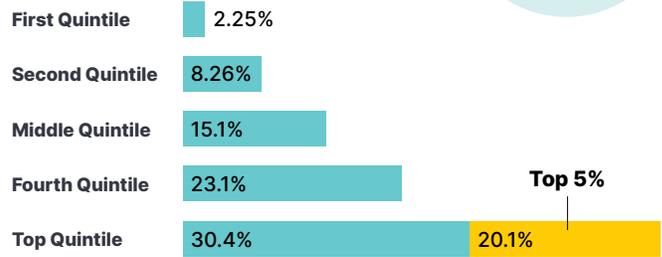
31%

OF SENIORS LIVE IN THE BOTTOM QUINTILES OF HOUSEHOLDS



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

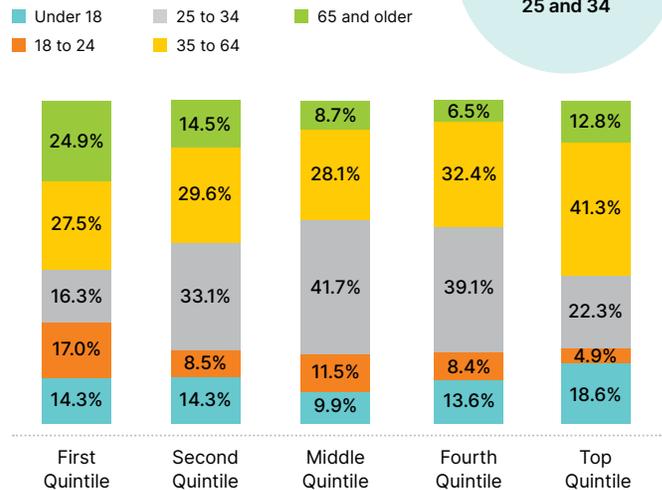
Share of Aggregate Income by Quintile, 2018



20%
of all income went to the top 5% of households

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Quintiles by Age, 2018



42%
in the middle quintile are between 25 and 34

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

\$330K



GAP BETWEEN AVERAGE INCOME OF TOP AND BOTTOM QUINTILES

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are highly correlated with income in Cambridge. People of color comprise almost 60 percent of the population in the lowest-income quintile and just 26 percent in the highest. And while Cambridge has become more diverse within every quintile, the change has not been uniform.

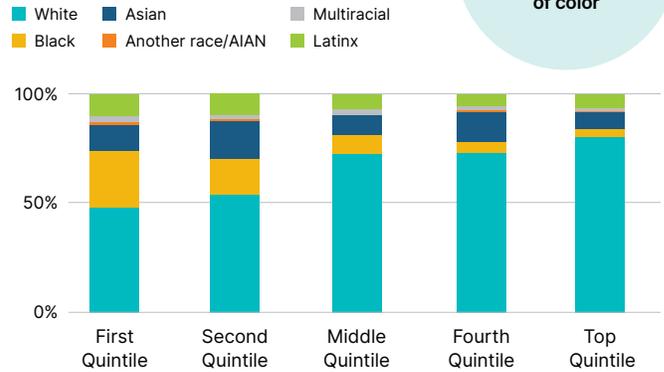
- **The Asian population makes up a larger share of the top and middle quintiles** today than a decade ago, increasing to nearly 13 percent of the top from 7.7 percent, and to 17 percent of the middle, from 8.8 percent.
- **The Latinx population** became both a larger share of the **middle quintile**, rising from 6.7 percent to 10.5 percent, and a larger share of the **lowest-income quintile**, increasing from 10 percent to 14 percent.
- The **Black population** has become a larger share of the **lowest two quintiles**. In fact, nearly 40 percent of the entire Black population in Cambridge now lives in the bottom quintile of households.

Household Types

The types of households and families vary widely across the quintiles, with **individuals living alone clustered in the two lowest-income quintiles; nonfamily households, including unmarried partners and adult roommates, living in the middle tier; and traditional “nuclear families” clustered at the top.**

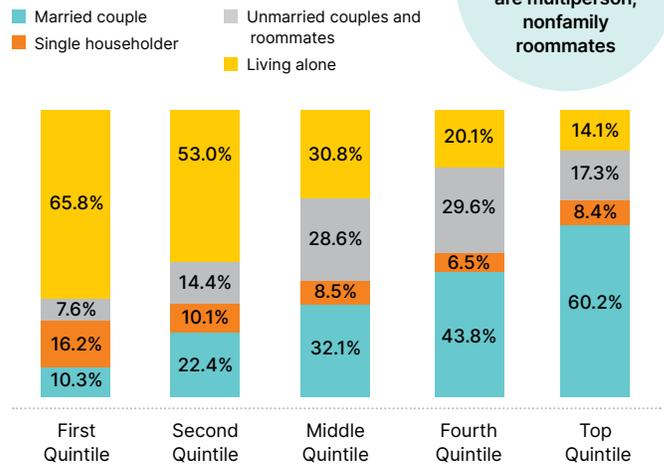
- More than 65 percent of all households in the first quintile and half of those in the second quintile are **individuals living alone**, whereas more than 60 percent of households in the top quintile are married couples.
- In the middle and fourth quintiles, nearly a third of all households are **nonfamily groups** living together or **married couples without children**.
- The **majority of children live in the top tier**, and there are stark economic differences in family types over the five groupings. More than a third of all single-parent families with children live in the lowest-income quintile, while more than 40 percent of married-couple families with children live in the highest-income quintile.

Quintiles by Race/Ethnicity, 2018



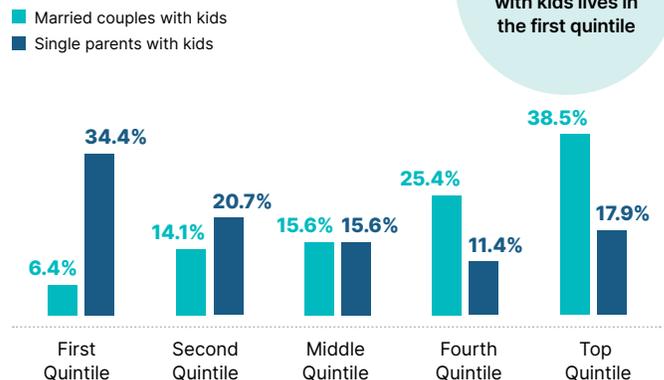
Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Quintiles by Household Type, 2018



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Households with Kids by Quintile, 2018



Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Housing and Community

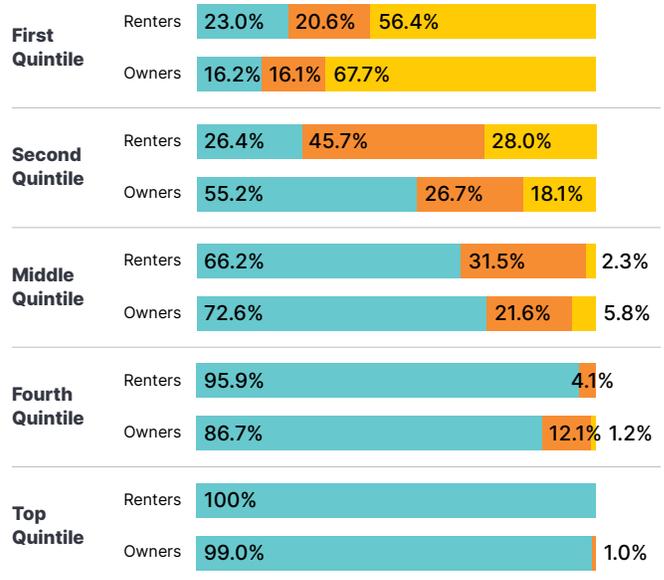
More than half of all households in the lowest-income quintile spend 50 percent or more of their income on housing. In a city dominated by renters, the top quintile stands out as majority homeowners. At least two-thirds of those in the bottom 80 percent of households are renters, compared with just 37 percent in the top quintile. While small, this is a higher share than a decade ago, when just a quarter were renters, indicating that there are now more high-income renters living in Cambridge. At the same time, the second quintile has the highest share of households that own their home outright — nearly 17 percent — suggesting that while these households may be cash poor, they have some wealth in the form of assets.

Cambridge has a notoriously high cost of living, which is reflected in the level of housing cost burden among lower-income households. Virtually all renters and homeowners in the two lowest-income quintiles are considered housing cost-burdened in that they are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. This includes more than half of the households in the lowest-income quintile, which are extremely cost-burdened and spend more than half of their income on housing. By contrast, almost no households in the top two quintiles are housing cost-burdened.

People convene for Cambridge festivals like Harvard Square's Oktoberfest and the HONK! Parade. *Photo courtesy of Sam Seidel.*

Housing Cost-Burden by Tenure, 2018

■ Up to 30% ■ 31 to 49% ■ >50%



Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

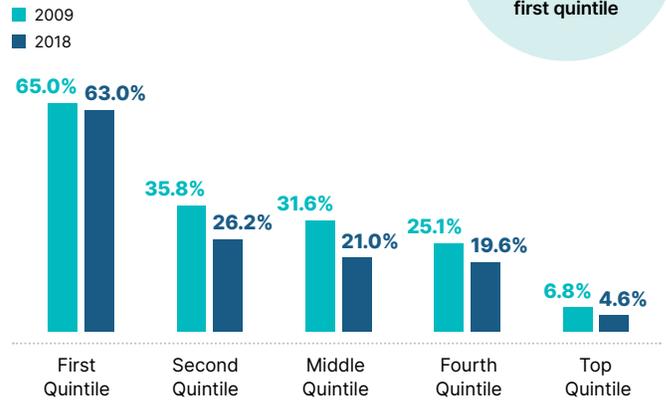


Renters, owners, and movers

Levels of housing mobility and stability vary across the economic spectrum, with a highly mobile middle and polarized long-term populations.

- Almost half of the households in the middle quintile have lived in their homes for less than two years, while approximately one-third of households in the lowest- and highest-income quintiles have lived in their homes for a decade or longer.
- Among long-term residents who have lived in their homes for more than 10 years, there is a stark difference in housing tenure by quintile: **more than 95 percent of long-term residents in the top quintile own their homes, whereas 63 percent of long-term residents in the first quintile rent** — a rate that speaks to the impact of Cambridge’s large share of affordable low-income housing. Across the spectrum, the share of long-term residents who are renters has declined from 36 percent to 26 percent in the second quintile and 31.6 percent to 21 percent in the middle quintile.

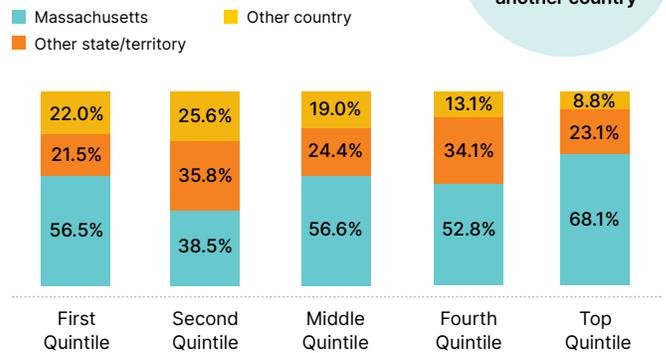
Share of Long-Term (10+ years) Residents Who Rent, by Quintile



Just under **2/3** of long-term renters are in the first quintile

Sources: 2005–2009 and 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Movers to Cambridge Within Last Year by Location, 2018



26% of recent movers in the second quintile moved from another country

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

A red X appears on vacant buildings throughout Cambridge. Many are undergoing renovation, like this one in the Coast neighborhood. *Photo by Lou Jones.*



Education and Workforce

More college degrees, fewer high school diplomas.

Cambridge is one of the most highly educated cities in the nation, though differences remain across the quintiles. Within the top three quintiles, not only do more than half of working-age adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, but also more than half have at least a master's degree. While adults in the lowest-income quintile have much lower rates of educational attainment, 45 percent of working-age adults nevertheless have at least a bachelor's degree — a rate that many communities would strive for. That said, 39 percent of adults in the lowest-income tier have a high school diploma or less.

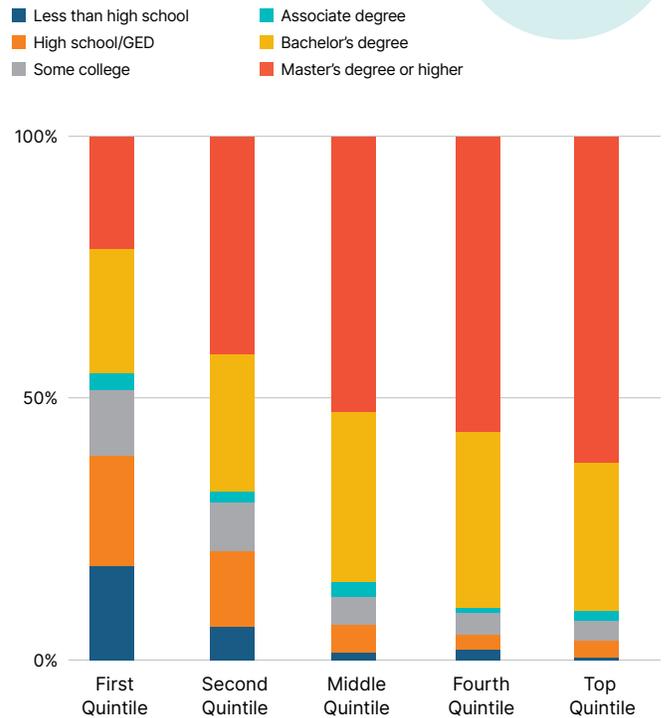
Disparities in educational attainment correlate with labor force disparities, despite Cambridge's booming economy. Even after a decade of record-high job growth and record-low unemployment, just 37 percent of working-age adults in the first quintile were in the labor force and employed, compared with at least 75 percent for adults in every other quintile. An additional 8 percent were unemployed — compared with a citywide average of less than 3 percent — and the remaining 54.5 percent were not participating in the labor force, either through choice or because they'd become discouraged.

Innovation Economy Employment

The growth in innovation jobs has mostly benefited the middle and fourth quintiles.

Across the income spectrum, the implications of the innovation boom are apparent. A decade ago, education occupations were among the top jobs held by adults in nearly all the quintiles in Cambridge — including the lowest-income quintile, where they accounted for more than 20 percent of jobs. Today, occupations in the innovation cluster have overtaken those in education in nearly all quintiles except the lowest-income one. There, lower-wage, service-sector jobs in health care and food service are the dominant employment options. In fact, just 8.5 percent of adults in this quintile hold an innovation-cluster occupation, compared with more than 20 percent of the middle, fourth, and top quintiles.

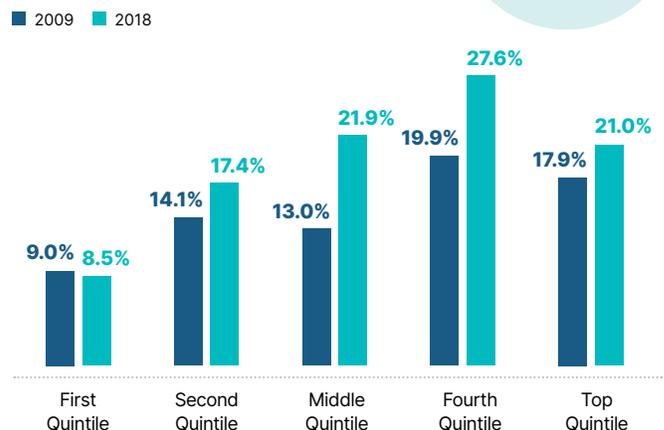
Educational Attainment by Quintile, Ages 25 to 64, 2018



45%
of adults in the first quintile have a bachelor's degree or higher

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Employment in Innovation Occupations, Ages 25 to 64, 2009 and 2018



8.5%
of adults in the first quintile are employed in the innovation sector

Source: 2014–2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Chapter 5: Voices of Cambridge

The community speaks out about the changes in its city



Tracy Chang (center), owner of Central Square's Pagu, is one of many food heroes in the community who are addressing hunger during the pandemic.
Photo by Lou Jones.

Cambridge is now a part of the wave of innovation cities whose booming economies, based on investment in research and advanced technologies, are changing the way people live. The city's vitality has been a blessing, generating growth, increasing incomes, bolstering municipal finances, and conferring an enticing appeal. But it has also created challenges by driving up the cost of living, decreasing housing affordability, and diminishing the sense of community as long-term populations are displaced by newcomers who may lack a sense of history and connection.

Many people who grew up in Cambridge and feel a deep attachment to the city cannot afford to raise their own children here.

In putting together this report, the Cambridge Community Foundation spoke with nearly two dozen people who live, work, study, or worship in Cambridge — people from all walks of life and all income brackets, and representing many races and ethnicities. Their words point the way to common and conflicting values, ideas, and points of view that can and should spark a much-needed civic conversation. We share some of their voices here.

Income Inequality

In this new Cambridge inequities abound. More children reside in wealthier households than a decade ago, but a third of single-parent families are in the lowest-income quintile. Seniors, too, are highly income-polarized, while the young-adult workforce comprises the middle- and upper-income tiers.

The plight of residents living on the edge, with incomes a fraction of those enjoyed by high earners, has steadily worsened as the city has grown more expensive around them. The data lay bare the economic fragility of so many households and underscore the correlation of race and ethnicity with income.

Poverty and prosperity are sometimes separated by just a few blocks. Many of the residents we spoke with noted the need to support our most vulnerable populations, challenging the city to make equity, inclusion, and justice not only words we say but actions we take as a society. People see diversity in experiences, races, and cultures as critical to the alchemy that leads to innovation and to a sense of community. Several of our interviewees mentioned that high rents are pushing out not only residents but also mom-and-pop stores. Said one, “A city loses a lot of its character when everything is high-end.”

Many also noted the dwindling of the middle and artist classes, emphasizing that reinvesting in both will help to keep the “feeling of possibility” that has always existed in Cambridge. “All the artists I know have had to leave, including even my parents, who had been here since the ‘70s,” said one woman, a classical musician. “I’m lucky because I have this co-op, but I also feel so alone. It’s me among the doctors.”

That feeling of invisibility was not uncommon. “A lot of the wealthy don’t realize how much poverty there is in the city, because they’re living in such isolation,” said one woman, a retiree.

\$106,800 

ANNUAL INCOME NEEDED TO AFFORD THE AVERAGE MARKET-RATE CAMBRIDGE RENTAL

Based on a monthly market rate rent of \$2,997 and an affordability definition of 30 percent of gross income on housing costs.



Tony Clark of My Brother's Keeper Cambridge has been one of many local advocates for the Black Lives Matter movement. *Photo courtesy of My Brother's Keeper Cambridge.*

Housing Affordability

A place to live, a path to wealth formation. There was a time when America strove to correct housing inequities, but its solutions were far from perfect. Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, a bold and sweeping response to the Great Depression, included a big push toward home ownership in the form of legislation and mortgage support, but it also ushered in public housing, which would develop problems of its own as the years wore on, and discriminatory practices that encouraged racial segregation.

Still, ownership and the wealth-building that went with it gradually increased for all races and classes — some more than others — over the next half century, before spiking in the late 1990s and early 2000s in a bubble that burst disastrously for millions of lower-income homeowners. Unfortunately, prices didn't decrease enough after the 2008 crash that home ownership opened to a new generation — and, they've risen astronomically since then, making Cambridge a city of renters.

Regarding the impacts of growing inequities in a high-cost city, folks are disheartened by the lack of options: “Things are being built left and right, but it's not something just anyone can afford,” one said. “Who is Cambridge for now?”

Some of our interviewees looked back with nostalgia to the 1970s, when rent control, which ended in 1994, “allowed us all to live amongst each other,” according to one man. “Black families were able to live on these nice tree-lined streets. All of those folks had to leave.” The Cantabrigians we spoke with bemoaned the loss of community and recalled neighbors who had to move out as prices rose, leaving them without a “network of people you can trust.” They expressed concerns about high costs driving out so many who have made Cambridge their home for decades. “We’re still diverse,” said one Black businessman, “but most of the diversity lives in the projects or in low-income housing, so it’s segregated diversity.”

Education Inequities

Persistent racial disparities begin early. Cambridge is a higher education and innovation mecca, with the highest share of adults with advanced degrees among the 25 innovation cities. Yet its racial disparities in education are stark and persistent, and the city is unable to retain young Black populations.

Compared with other groups, Black Cambridge residents do better than the state average for their peers, with 33.5 percent holding a bachelor’s degree or higher, but not as well as other racial groups in Cambridge.

The imbalance begins in K–12, where the city’s income polarization is reflected in its racial makeup and in where the children live. Though Cambridge’s public schools have the state’s second-highest per-student expenditure, racial inequities remain. As the country in general and Cambridge in particular move away from an industrial economy and toward a world of innovation and high tech in the fields of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), these inequities are even more life-altering than in the past.

56% 

OF BLACK THIRD-GRADERS DID NOT MEET THE BENCHMARK IN READING, COMPARED WITH 20 PERCENT OF WHITE THIRD-GRADERS

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

“MANY OF OUR KIDS WALK AMONG THE TECH AND UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS AND HAVE NO IDEA WHAT’S GOING ON WITHIN THEM. WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF PLANTING THE SEEDS TO GUIDE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS CAREER PATHS WITHIN THE INNOVATION SECTORS.”

— TY BELLITTI

Residents commented extensively on this topic. “A lot of very inflamed, explosive issues come up around the schools,” said one, “but my frustration is with our failure to do the deep, thoughtful, creative work that’s required to level the playing field — generating more opportunity and strengthening the academic, career, and life prospects of all kids.” STEM initiatives, according to a city employee, are “trying to create pathways, but we’re up against the powerful cultural reality of institutional racism. There’s been an awakening recently that the status quo — patting ourselves on the back and saying we’re doing well relative to everyone else — is not good enough.”

She wasn’t the only one to link education inequality to a larger problem: “Racism is America’s great flaw,” said a local business owner. “It’s been there since the beginning. America will never be what it promised, the aspirational parts of our history, until we reckon with that legacy, and Cambridge is not free of that — it’s there structurally in the school system, the police force, city government, and in many of society’s private, business, and civic institutions.”

The Pandemic

The long-term impact of COVID-19 on communities

will not be known for a while. The disparity gaps were widening well before Cambridge was dealt the additional blow of the pandemic in early 2020. In a matter of weeks, job losses and unemployment applications skyrocketed; beloved restaurants, cafes, and small businesses closed, in some cases permanently; layoffs and furloughs decimated “recession-proof” industries like higher education; and the closing of schools revealed that four decades since the start of the computer revolution, a digital divide still exists — even in a city that is home to many of the largest tech companies in the world.

If there is a silver lining to the pandemic perhaps it is the clarity with which inequalities have been laid bare and the opportunity that affords us to take decisive action for positive change. Innovation cities like Cambridge are shaping the future of urban America, and their decisions today will determine whether the benefits of the new economy will be concentrated at the top of our society or shared more equally among all residents.

We asked people how the pandemic affected their lives and what they thought its fallout might be. “Everyone is paying attention [to racial disparities] right now,” said one Cantabrigian, “but will they be paying attention later? Will this interest and care continue? How real will it be for people in this city in the long run?” Others suggested a more concerted effort to create community events like block parties to help neighborhoods rebuild once the crisis is over. “We took community events for granted when everyone was able to go out and move around,” he said. “But now we’ve had the wake-up call that we have to rebuild together.”

One Harvard professor summarized the feelings of many when he said, “I want desperately for this pandemic to be a catalyst for change. I have often hoped that the pandemic would bring home how uneven the playing field is for low-income people and communities of color and would motivate people to walk the talk and mobilize for far deeper, more meaningful change.”

Tina Alu prepares to open the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee’s food pantry. *Photo by Lou Jones.*





A Sense of Hope

A flawed but much-loved community looks to the future. Cantabrigians often say that their city is a special place — an intersection of education, innovation, and art with a certain openness and freedom, threaded together by humanistic traditions and a generous attitude. Many believe we have reached a critical juncture where we must contemplate the future of our community, seize the opportunity — and fulfill the obligation — to think differently about our city and the challenges we face.

Residents repeatedly highlighted the possibilities in a city that is deeply intellectual and where “values of academic excellence and self-improvement trickle down to all so that people from Cambridge want to aspire to greatness,” despite the fact that many “slip through the cracks because we rest on our laurels as a city.”

Cambridge’s manageable scale, innovation mindset, and deeply held values of equity and inclusion are important assets for making change — perhaps even change that can act as a model for other innovation cities. We have the resources and the capacity to build a better and stronger social, civic, and economic fabric for an inclusive future, and to design the city we all want to live in. The people we interviewed pointed out that the city has good resources for immigrant families, supports local “nonfranchise businesses,” and has a “good number of outdoor spaces and green areas to escape to.” People appreciated its “inclusionary housing,” its being “a leader

in participatory budgeting, recycling, curbside compost pickup, and other everyday conveniences,” and the “collectivist experience” of politics here. “It’s not perfect by any stretch,” said one man, “but it’s the only place I’ve lived in my entire life where I truly felt like I belonged. When I get up in the morning, I’m pretty excited to be here.”

A Call to Action

This report is a call to action. As a community foundation, we see a Cambridge that is generous, concerned, and resourceful. We are relying on those altruistic impulses to guide us through the coming years to a more equitable future for all Cantabrigians.

To that end, the Cambridge Community Foundation will invite dialogue among stakeholders across city sectors and work to make these discussions a catalyst for developing an inspired, inclusive agenda for the city we love. We call upon community leaders from all disciplines to join in shaping this transformative discussion. Our beloved community is wise, experienced, angry, insistent, and determined. Its voices are not to be ignored. We must listen to one another, and, together, take action.

Above: Yvonne Gittens, a lifelong Cambridge resident and longtime volunteer with the Cambridge Community Center. *Photo by Lou Jones.*

Acknowledgments

This report contains important data, but numbers alone cannot tell the full story of a city undergoing change. We are deeply grateful to the many Cambridge residents who enriched this report with their thoughts and stories, and to those who reviewed our findings. We are also grateful to CCF Board Member Rev. Adam L. Dyer and Charles M. Sullivan, executive director of the Cambridge Historical Commission, for their invaluable insights, and to CCF staff members Atsede Assayehgen and Jenny White for their contributions. We extend our thanks to the Microsoft Corporation for its financial support of this project. Finally, we thank the exceptional photographers of Cambridge, whose talent behind the lens helped us see Cambridge with a new clarity.

Interviewees

Ty Bellitti
Tevin Charles
Polyxane Cobb
Ben Fox
Elon Fyfield
John Gates
CherryAnn Goodridge
Keisha Greaves
Jim Manning
Emmanuel Mervil

Abina Nepal
Jackie O'Riley
Erinn Pearson
Sherletha Perron
Susan Richards
Rose Schutzberg
Rick Weissbourd
and two anonymous
interviewees

Reviewers

Andus Baker
Ty Bellitti
Tara Clark
Tony Clark
Cliff Cook
Lauren Cosulich
Tom Evans
Christina Gabriel
Sarah Gallop
Bob Gittens
Ken Goulding

Richard Harding
Rick Harriman
Chris Hope
Phil Johnson
Rosemarie Johnson
Steve Johnson
Drew Kane
Elizabeth Keating
Dan Kern
Lori Lander

Photographers

Eva Martin Blythe
Khari Milner
Maisha Moses
Sirisha Rangavajhala
Kenneth Reeves
Susan Richards
Ellen Semonoff
Lorraine Thornhill
Susan Walsh
C.A. Webb

Greig Cranna
Kristen Joy Emack
Lou Jones
Sam Seidel
and others

More Voices of Cambridge

"WHEN I GREW UP IN NEWTOWNE COURT, THERE WAS A COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER AND WE DID POTTERY, DARKROOM PHOTOGRAPHY, CRAFTS, RAP, MUSICALS. WE WERE POOR, BUT WE WERE SO RICH IN EXPERIENCES DUE TO THE CENTER. AND THROUGH THE MAYOR'S PROGRAM AND THE WORKFORCE PROGRAM WE LEARNED THINGS THAT TO THIS DAY HELP US — RESUME WRITING, INTERVIEW TIPS, TEAMWORK, AND A WORK ETHIC. WE DIDN'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS UNTIL LATER ON."

— EMMANUEL MERVIL, FOOD CONSULTANT

"I FEEL LIKE THERE'S GREAT OPPORTUNITY IN THIS TERRIBLE PANDEMIC — AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE A STEP BACK AND FIGURE OUT WHAT WAS WORKING, WHAT WE MISS, AND WHAT WE CAN LIVE WITHOUT."

— JIM MANNING, MAGICIAN

"WE NEED TO STAY VIGILANT AND CONTINUE THIS CHARGE FORWARD TO REALLY CREATE EQUALITY IN OUR CITY. ... WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO AND THERE ARE A LOT OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES AT STAKE."

— ROSE SCHUTZBERG, MEDICAL STUDENT

"PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LIVE WITHOUT THE FACT OF THEIR ECONOMIC STATUS DEMEANING THEM."

— POLYXANE COBB, RETIRED





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