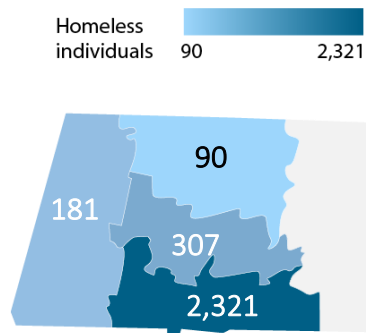


# HOMELESSNESS & OLDER ADULTS

Mental health and homelessness are integrally related. Ensuring access to affordable, accessible, and safe housing plays an important role in the health and wellbeing of older adults.

## Homelessness in Western Massachusetts



**2,899** people experienced homelessness in Western Massachusetts on one night in January 2018 (181 in Berkshire, 90 in Franklin, 307 in Hampshire, and 2,321 in Hampden county).<sup>1</sup> In Hampden county, approximately 1 out of every 200 people was experiencing homelessness.

**98%** were sleeping in shelters or transitional housing, **2%** were sleeping outside.<sup>1</sup>

**106** individuals were chronically homeless.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1.** Heat map of homeless individuals in Western Mass on one night of January 2018, based on Western Mass Housing First reporting.

## Older Adult Homelessness

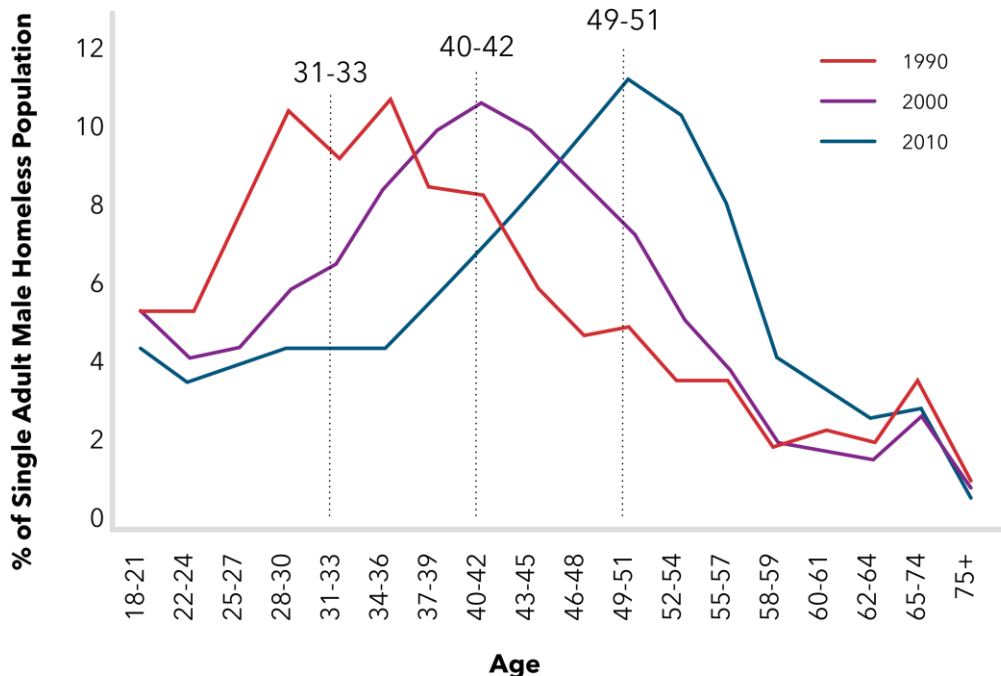
Homelessness disproportionately affects people born in the latter half of the post-War baby boom (1955-1965).<sup>2</sup>

**50%**

Of chronically homeless individuals\* are between 51 and 61 years of age<sup>3</sup>

**22.3%**

Of homeless individuals in emergency shelters are between the ages of 51 and 61 (does not include families)<sup>4</sup>

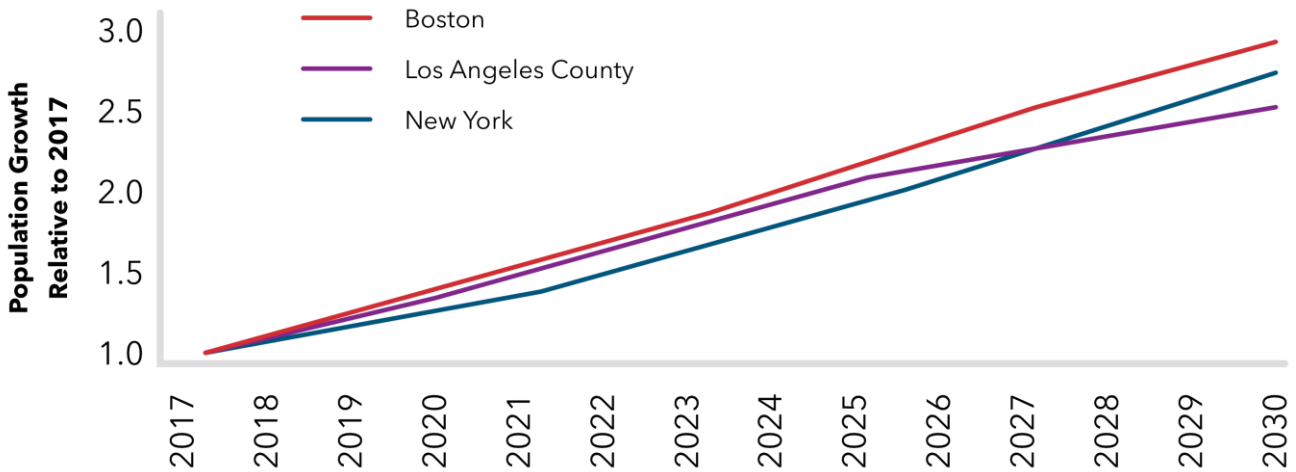


**Figure 2.** Age Distribution of Adult Male Shelter Users in the United States. Adapted from Culhane et al 2019.

\*Chronically homeless individuals refers to individuals who are continuously homeless for one year or more or experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years, where the combined length of time homeless is at least 12 months.

# HOMELESSNESS & OLDER ADULTS

## Projected Growth in Percentage of Homeless Individuals 65 and Older



**Figure 3.** Forecasted Relative Change in the 65 and Older Homeless Population Compared to 2017. Adapted from Culhane et al 2019.

## Physical & Mental Health Implications

**3-4 times**

Higher mortality rate for older adults experiencing homelessness than the general American population<sup>5</sup>

**85%**

Of homeless persons over the age of 50 reported at least one chronic medical condition<sup>6</sup>

**20-50%**

Of people who are homeless have a serious mental health condition<sup>6</sup>

### About the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health



Since 1913, the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH) has worked to improve understanding of mental health conditions and combat disparities in health services access. We envision a day when all individuals and families across the Commonwealth have the resources and opportunities they need to promote resilience and protect overall health.

<sup>1</sup> Western Mass Housing First, <https://www.westernmasshousingfirst.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Culhane et al., "The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness: Could Housing Solutions Be Funded by Avoidance of Excess Shelter, Hospital, and Nursing Home Costs?" 2019

<sup>3</sup> Culhane, "The Age Structure of Contemporary Homelessness: Risk Period or Cohort Effect?" 2011

<sup>4</sup> US Department of Housing & Urban Development, "Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress" 2010

<sup>5</sup> Hearth, "Ending Homelessness among Older Adults and Elders through Permanent Supportive Housing," 2011

<sup>6</sup> Greenberg & Rosenheck, "Mental health correlates of past homelessness in the National Comorbidity Study Replication," 2010