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## Census finds a world of differences

From Weston's affluence to Springfield's poverty

By **Cindy Rodriguez, Globe Staff,** and **Bill Dedman, Globe Correspondent,** 8/27/2002

**W**ESTON - A 55-year-old entrepreneur hosed soap bubbles from his white Porsche convertible along Buckskin Drive on a recent Sunday, in a neighborhood where the cars almost outnumber the licensed drivers. On weekdays this area is nearly deserted except for landscapers and grocery delivery trucks that pull up to stately, oversized homes. But that doesn't mean no one is watching: Near a cul-de-sac, surveillance cameras keep an eye on the home of the CEO of John Hancock Insurance.

At the other end of the state, under the shadow of an interstate in Springfield, the air is thick with Spanish at the row of brick apartment buildings that line Main Street. The residents carpool to work - when they've got somewhere to go. Only one in four adults in this slice of Springfield has a job.

These are the richest and poorest neighborhoods in Massachusetts, according to 2000 Census results released yesterday. Two-thirds of the 1,147 residents in this

section of Weston have a household income of more than \$200,000 a year. In the Springfield neighborhood, the typical household income is \$7,271, which is below the federal poverty level for even a single individual.

And while some of the differences between the extremes are obvious - Weston residents are overwhelmingly white; nearly 97 percent of the Springfield neighborhood residents rent their homes - there are also subtler findings. The poorer residents leave for work an hour earlier than the rich ones do, and their homes tend to be older.

Analysts say the enormous gulf between the two neighborhoods underscores the increasingly powerful role of education for getting ahead in an economy where unskilled manufacturing jobs continue to move overseas. Two-thirds of the adult men and 53 percent of Weston's adult population have an advanced college degree, while just 3 percent of Springfield residents have a bachelor's degree.

"Workers with less skills and education are competing with the global economy head on," said Mark Zandi, a consultant for the Massachusetts state government and chief economist with Economy.com, a Pennsylvania research and forecasting firm. "It's been a long-running problem which started in the 1960s and has increased, resulting in an

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### A study in contrasts

The Globe compared census block groups by median income. Statistics for the richest 10 percent, the poorest 10 percent, and those in the middle:

	Richest	Middle	Lowest
Median household income	\$98,600	\$50,650	\$21,300
Non-Latino white population	94%	93%	50%
With master's degree	32%	10%	3%

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increased skewing of income and wealth."

The newly released census data offer the first look at income and other demographic information by neighborhood, allowing a look at the differences between the lifestyles of the rich and the poor. At one extreme is the neighborhood in Weston: Only 2 percent of the residents rent, there are 783 registered vehicles for 770 adult residents, and 80 percent are married. At the other end are the Springfield residents: 97 percent of them rent, there are 73 vehicles for 380 adults, and only 30 percent of them are married.

Yet there are similarities between: The Weston area has nearly the same percentage of single fathers (4 percent) as the Springfield area (5 percent), and neither neighborhood has a significant African-American population.

Both communities have a significant foreign language-speaking population. In Weston, 15 percent of the adults speak an Asian language at home instead of English, but 4 out of 5 of those say they speak English very well. In Springfield, it's a predominantly Puerto Rican *barrio* where 92 percent of the adults speak Spanish at home, and of them, 40 percent speak no English.

At more than \$200,000 a year in median household income, the western part of Weston led the state's 5,000 neighborhoods at making money. That means that more than half of the households were in the highest income category listed by the Census Bureau.

Eight neighborhoods in the state had the same top income bracket - three in Weston, two in Newton, and one each in Brookline, Wellesley, and Winchester. They may make a lot more, but there's no way to determine that because the Census Bureau doesn't release household income brackets higher than \$200,000. The Globe designated the west Weston neighborhood as the richest because it had the highest share of households - 63 percent - with incomes greater than \$200,000.

The poorest area is in Springfield, near a bend in the Connecticut River, an area of public housing and ramshackle houses. Only half the households had incomes greater than \$7,271.

But a Globe analysis of the top, bottom, and middle 10 percent of neighborhoods based on income shows that not every rich neighborhood is like Weston and not every poor one is like Springfield. One of the poorest neighborhoods is a predominantly white neighborhood in Harwich on Cape Cod.

The absolute middle of Massachusetts wage earners are in a section of Somerville, just northwest of Cambridge Hospital, where most people are single, white, educated professionals, many of whom take roommates in apartment houses because rents are so high. The median household income is \$50,542, mirroring the state median of \$50,502.

In this section, just 44 percent of the 1,385 people live with their families; the rest are living with friends or partners. There are just 59 children living here, compared with 357 in the poor neighborhood and 368 in the rich one. Thirty-seven percent lived in a different state in 1995. Sixty-six percent have a bachelor's degree, and the unemployment rate among them is 3 percent. No one in this part of Somerville lives below the poverty level.

In this Somerville section, women earn more than men (\$26,000 to \$19,000 in 1999), but that's not the norm. In most middle-income neighborhoods in the state, women earn only

**How the rich are different**

Median values for the 10 percent of Massachusetts census block groups reporting the highest median incomes, the lowest median incomes, and those right in the middle.

	Highest 10%	Middle 10%	Lowest 10%
With 4-year college degree	65%	28%	9%
Married	69%	52%	28%
Both spouses employed (of all married)	62%	70%	53%
Children living with married couple	93%	80%	43%
Born in Mass.	62%	73%	54%
Housing owner-occupied	94%	70%	19%
At same address since '95	67%	62%	47%
Year house was built	1961	1953	1943
Leaving for work before 7 a.m.	19%	27%	30%
Leaving for work after 9 a.m.	16%	20%	28%
Less than 1/2-hour commute	52%	62%	70%

**Note:** The state is divided into 5,000 census block groups. Each 10 percent represents 500 block groups.

**Source:** Globe analysis of US Census data  
 Globe Staff Graphic / David Butler

about 70 cents on the dollar when compared to men.

The neighborhood is full of take-out Chinese restaurants and pizza joints, a place where the friendly owner of the Lucky Laundry advertises free soap on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Parking is horrendous and chain-link fences surround tiny Colonials.

Irene Katz, a 26-year-old nurse lives in a house in Somerville with her brother and two other roommates, splitting the \$2,800 monthly rent. They're moving out this week, a last-minute surprise; their landlord is selling the three-bedroom home.

"It's a busy neighborhood. You see all sorts of people out late at night," Katz said. "But people don't know each other. I haven't gotten to know my neighbors."

In the Springfield neighborhood, where Interstate 91 looms above, residents talk of a neighborhood where everyone knows everybody's business. It's tight-knit. On Main Street, a red van with a painting of a chicken offers \$2 *pinchos*, the Puerto Rican version of shish kebabs. A line at the corner check-cashing store was 20-deep Friday afternoon, and two boxes marked with a Guatemalan address were waiting to be shipped.

Storefronts have rusted gates, the sidewalks are cracked, and even the local Pentecostal church has graffiti on its concrete steps. Neighbors laughingly call their apartment buildings "roach motels."

"The route out is education," said Katharine Bradbury, vice president and economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. "The labor market in the US has increasingly paid more and more for additional education. The gap in pay between someone with no high school diploma and someone with a degree has expanded in the '80s and '90s and continues to increase."

You don't have to tell that to Luis Rodriguez, 24. With a seventh-grade education, he doesn't expect to earn enough to pull himself, his common-law wife, and two sons out of poverty.

The four of them live in a dilapidated brick apartment building, in a tiny, one-bedroom apartment where the walls are cracking and roaches roam, even though they keep the place clean.

Rodriguez worked on an assembly line at Omniglow, a factory that makes light bulbs, before learning he had cancer. He's still in remission nearly a year after an oncology surgeon removed a baseball-sized tumor near his lungs. He willingly pulls up his T-shirt to show the red scars that stretch across his chest.

His is a neighborhood where children tested by health officials had high levels of lead in their blood. Next to his apartment building, on Main Street, stands a four-story brick building with its windows boarded up. The city condemned the building two years ago, but they let it stand even though it is a fire hazard.

His father, 44-year-old Edwin Rodriguez, doesn't mind. That condemned building serves as a cover. He lives in a 1970 Starcraft camper in the back parking lot. Though it has no running water or air conditioning, the camper is rent-free - and this way the unemployed trucker can be close to his four sons, who all live in the area.

For a while Rodriguez worked loading and unloading trucks for an Ames store in nearby Westfield, but when it closed he wasn't able to find another job. His English is bad, he says, so he has failed the Class A driver's test, keeping him from being a trucker - a job he held in Puerto Rico for 27 years.

In Weston, where Theodore Kampoures was busy washing his Porsche the other day, people have their own reasons for staying. "I've been here 14 years," said Kampoures, who immigrated to the United States from Greece in 1965 and built his own contracting business, T. K. Electric. "It's quiet and peaceful."

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