

# Community Health Assessment

For the Town Of  
**MILTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

**HEALTH DIRECTOR,  
PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE**

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**Milton Health Department**  
**Milton, Massachusetts**

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COVER PAGE: The Town Green, Town Hall, Baron Hugo Gazebo photo courtesy of Caroline A. Kinsella

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# Acknowledgements

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Because local health planning is necessarily a community-informed process, the Milton Health Department invited a diverse group of residents to comprise a Community Advisory Group to provide feedback on the Plan's approach, findings and strategic plan, and to help recruit participants for focus group and survey participation. The Board of Directors of *The Partnership for a Healthy Milton (PHM)*, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to promoting health equity and wellness in Milton, served as core members of the Community Advisory Group. Indeed, one of its members-Deborah Milbauer, MPH, MSW, helped inspire this planning process by writing a public health business case recommending that the Milton Health Department conduct a Community Health Assessment as a best practice toward achieving national accreditation. The Partnership for a Healthy Milton's members are Milton residents, many of whom have professional training in public health. Two high school students, and other community members, were also invited to join the Community Advisory Group. We thank the following residents for devoting their time and expertise:

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

### **Anita Albright**

*AARP MA Executive Council*

### **Griffin Angus**

*Milton Youth Advocates for Change member*

### **Debbie Muse Greene (PHM)**

*Milton Public School Employee*

### **Dr. Marian T. Hannan (PHM)**

*Senior Scientist, Hebrew SeniorLife*

### **Dr. Linda Hudson (PHM)**

*Assistant Professor of Public Health, Tufts University*

### **Stefano Keel (PHM)**

*Specialist in public health prevention and SUDs, retired*

### **Dr. Patricia Janulewicz Lloyd (PHM)**

*Associate Professor of Environmental Public Health, Boston University*

### **Jennifer Lo**

*Milton Youth Advocates for Change*

### **Laureane Marquez**

*Manager of Community Benefits & Community Relations at BID Milton Hospital*

### **Deborah Milbauer (PHM)**

*Senior Public Health Lecturer, Northeastern University*

### **Priscilla Neves (PHM)**

*Milton Resident*

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### **Bruce Talanian**

*Member of The Milton Coalition, Security Officer at Cunningham Park*

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### **Select Board's Office**

**The Milton Coalition (a program of the Milton Health Department)**

**Planning and Community Development Department**

**Department of Public Works**

**Parks and Recreation Department**

**Milton Public School Department**

**Town Clerk's Office**

**Engineering Department**

**Police Department**

**Fire Department**

**Assessor's Department**

**Treasurer's Office**

**Health Department Staff**

### **Veteran's Service**

**Council on Aging**

**Transformative Healthcare (ambulance service)**

**Blue Hills Community Health Alliance**

**Milton Early Childhood Alliance**

**Select Board's Equity and Justice for All Committee**

**Milton Interfaith Clergy Association**

**Milton Residences for the Elderly**

**Fuller Village**

**Milton Housing Authority**

**Milton Community Food Pantry**

**Concord Baptist Church Food Pantry**

**Brookwood Farms**

**Carolyn V. Marsden Design**

We especially want to thank Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital -Milton for providing valuable Milton-specific data for Milton's Community Health Assessment.

...and we thank the many Milton residents, town workforce, and school personnel for making the time to help us learn more about the existing health assets and needs, as well as solutions for creating a healthier community.

# Acronyms

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**ACE:** Adverse Childhood Experiences

**ACS:** American Community Survey (annual updated U.S. Census estimates)

**BID Milton:** Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton

**BMI:** Body Mass Index

**BIPOC:** Black, Indigenous, (and) People of Color

**BOH:** Board of Health

**BRFSS:** Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (CDC survey of adults)

**CDC:** U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**COA:** Council on Aging

**CHA:** Community Health Assessment

**CHIP:** Community Health Improvement Plan

**HIP:** Healthy Incentives Program, augmenting SNAP benefits

**DEP:** MA Department of Environmental Protection

**DEI:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

**DESE:** Department of Early and Secondary Education

**DOT:** MA Department of Transportation

**ED:** Emergency Department

**EVP:** Electronic Vape Product

**GIS:** Geographic Information Systems

**KI:** Key Informants

**KII:** Key Informant Interviews

**LGBTQIA+:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Plus

**MAPC:** Metropolitan Area Planning Council

**MCHDT:** Massachusetts Community Health Data Tool (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-health-data-tool>)

**MHA:** Milton Housing Authority

**MHD:** Milton Health Department

**MDPH:** Massachusetts Department of Public Health

**MECA:** Milton Early Childhood Alliance

**MPS:** Milton Public Schools

**MPD:** Milton Police Department

**MVAs:** Motor Vehicle Accidents

**MYAC:** Milton Youth Advocates for Change

**MYRBS:** Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey

**PHAB:** Public Health Accreditation Board

**SDOH:** Social Determinants of Health

**SBIRT:** Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment

**STI:** Sexually Transmitted Infection

**SUDs:** Substance Use Disorders

**TB:** Tuberculosis

**THC:** Tetrahydrocannabinol is the principal psychoactive constituent of cannabis

**PM2.5:** Particulate Matter 2.5 Micrometers (and smaller)

**PMS:** Pierce Middle School

**WIC:** Women, Infant and Children

**YRBS:** Youth Risk Behavior Survey

# Executive Summary

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The Milton Health Department led a community health improvement planning process between 2022-2024. The process consisted of conducting a Community Health Assessment and then guiding the community in developing a Community Health Improvement Plan that prioritizes strategies for addressing the most pressing health needs identified in the assessment.

Based on the available quantitative data collected on overall community health status, Milton residents of all ages appear to enjoy better health than the rest of the State on many important measures. For example, the Milton age-adjusted and premature mortality rates are notably lower than the state average. A smaller percentage of residents live with a disability in Milton than in the state. Milton public high school students and older adults (65+) fared favorably compared to the state on most health and wellbeing survey indicators. Furthermore, many social determinants of health indicators are strong in Milton—such as income, employment, education, access to nature, access to quality health care, and feelings of belonging.

However, based on the statistical reports, surveys, focus groups, and interviews that were analyzed, Milton residents do face health challenges that could benefit by public health promotion and prevention initiatives as well as by community-wide policies, systems and environmental approaches that promote community health:

## Overall Health Challenges

**\*Behavioral Health** Mental health and substance misuse challenges are two issues that figure prominently, across the age spectrum, as significant health challenges for Milton residents and employees.

**\*Cancers** The most recent state data (2016-2020 combined) indicates that Milton's overall cancer rates are higher than both the state and nation.

### **\*Chronic Diseases and Conditions**

*Children:* asthma, diabetes and obesity

*Adults:* asthma, hypertension, heart disease, obesity and high cholesterol

*Older Adults:* hypertension, arthritis, coronary artery disease, diabetes, stroke and dementia

**\*Infectious Diseases and Other Illnesses** Flu and COVID-19 (Infectious), Lyme Disease and Anaplasmosis (Tick Borne)

### **\*Sexually Transmitted Infections**

**\*Injuries** Injuries from falls were the most frequent cause of significant emergency responses for both youth and older adults (65+), while motor vehicle accidents were the most frequent emergency responses for adults.

**\*Environmental Exposures** The Health Department is concerned about growing cases of unsanitary and unsafe housing conditions. Many residents are concerned about climate change and degradation of the town's natural resources, although air and drinking water quality are within safety standards. There is also concern about heavy road traffic, air traffic noise, and air pollution in some areas of Milton.

## Special Population Groups

Youth, older adults, town employees, LGBTQIA+ residents, new parents, and residents of color in Milton experience unique challenges that impact their wellbeing, in addition to the health conditions above that impact all residents:

**\*Youth** Lack of sleep, excessive screen time, unhealthy eating, lack of life balance, peer and social pressures, sexual violence, binge drinking, bullying, family trauma, concussions, and distracted driving.

**\*Older Adults** Disabilities, chronic diseases, Alzheimer's and dementia, falls, transportation to supermarkets and medical appointments, lack of home supports/aging in place, and social isolation make aging in place difficult.

**\*Town Employees** Lack of appropriate staffing levels or safety training. Employees highlighted the need for a workforce that reflects the community's diverse composition.

**\*LGBTQIA+ Youth** Bullying and stigma, personal safety, lack of understanding.

**\*Residents of Color** Higher rates of fair or poor health.

**\*Adults** Insufficient exercise, motor vehicle accidents

**\*New Parents** Lack of support programs for pregnant people and new parents within Milton.

## Social Determinants of Health

The following community conditions that impact health and wellbeing stood out as needing more attention in Milton, based on the examination of local needs assessments and surveys, as well as input from residents and employees:

- Food and housing insecurity for lower income populations as well as older residents
- Unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions
- Insufficient communications of townwide information especially for new residents and renters, as well as culturally and linguistically appropriate materials
- More intentional planning and communications amongst town and community programs to better address the health and social service needs of the community
- Affordable and accessible childcare
- Intra-town transportation needs
- Racial and LGBTQIA+ bias and social isolation
- Aging in place, falls prevention, and social isolation of older adults
- Organized, safe after school social activities for youth
- More opportunities and access to indoor and outdoor physical fitness and recreational activities for people of all ages and abilities
- Climate change and impacts, especially in environmental justice areas of Town
- Mitigating airplane and automobile traffic
- Built environment improvements including pedestrian and automobile safety; handicapped accessibility in open spaces.
- Town offices and meeting spaces.



# Introduction

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## The Milton Health Department

The Milton Health Department is overseeing the development of the Town's first Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to have a roadmap for better addressing the health and wellbeing of those residing and working in the Town of Milton, Massachusetts.

***The Milton Health Department's mission is to achieve the highest level of wellness for all Milton residents by adopting reasonable health regulations, by providing preventative health programming and by preparing and planning for public health emergencies.***

The Milton Health Department works to promote and protect the health of residents and workforce in the Town of Milton, Massachusetts (MA) by assuring access to a comprehensive set of public health services defined by state law and regulations. This complex set of responsibilities includes enforcement of state sanitary, environmental, housing, and health codes. These broad categories include:

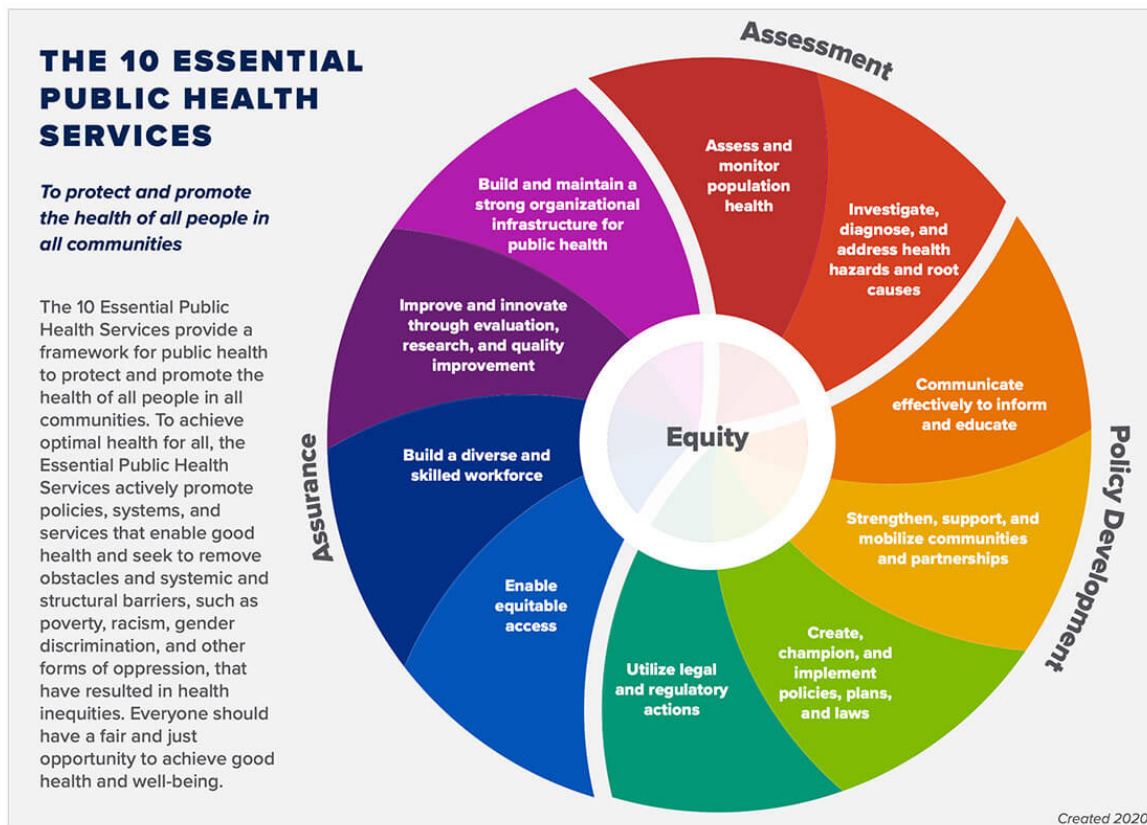
- Protection of the food supply through inspections and permitting of restaurants, mobile food trucks, schools, food pantries, and farmers market vendors
- Inspections and permitting of septic systems, and the witnessing of soil evaluations
- Health care and disease control, including timely reporting and response to communicable diseases
- Administer seasonal flu vaccinations and perform blood pressure clinics
- Animal inspectional services, rabies surveillance and control, issuing quarantines and release notices
- Arbovirus Surveillance/ Mosquito control, West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus control activities
- Investigate environmental complaints including trash, rodents, asbestos and lead complaints
- Investigate rental occupant housing complaints and issue Sanitary code violations to landlords pertaining to minimum standards of fitness for human habitation, State Sanitary Code, Chapter II
- Inspections of public and semi-public swimming pools and ponds. Monitoring of bacteriologic reports and required testing
- Inspect and permit recreational camps for children
- Demolition Plan reviews
- License and inspect tobacco retailers and enforce local regulations
- Bioterrorism and emergency preparedness planning for a wide range of hazards
- Tuberculosis case management and Direct Observation Therapy
- License and inspect body art establishments
- Issue over 700 burial permits yearly
- Food and financial referrals (legal/utility assistance)
- Sharps (needle disposal) and mercury disposal
- Substance use prevention and education

- Mental health referrals
- Short term counseling
- Resident and family support
- Employment and financial resources
- Social service application assistance
- Method of acquiring resources
- A wide array of other responsibilities including managing numerous grants, and donations

An elected Board of Health is charged with overseeing these statutory services and is given the legal authority to set policies and make regulations to protect the public and environmental health at the community level. Milton Health Department staff are charged with implementing the regulations, but also work in collaboration with Town departments and community-based programs to promote community health beyond these statutory requirements. For example, they provide social services and substance misuse prevention programs for town residents, as well as provide consultation and educational programs to organizations across town. Monitoring and addressing the COVID-19 pandemic have added significant responsibilities over the past few years.

## Public Health Planning

The national Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) provides a framework, called The Ten Essential Public Health Services, for governmental health departments to promote community health and wellbeing. These services represent the foundation for providing effective health promotion and disease prevention programming, and they encompass a wide range of activities from monitoring health trends to mobilizing community partnerships. The following graphic describes PHAB's Ten Essential Public Health Services.

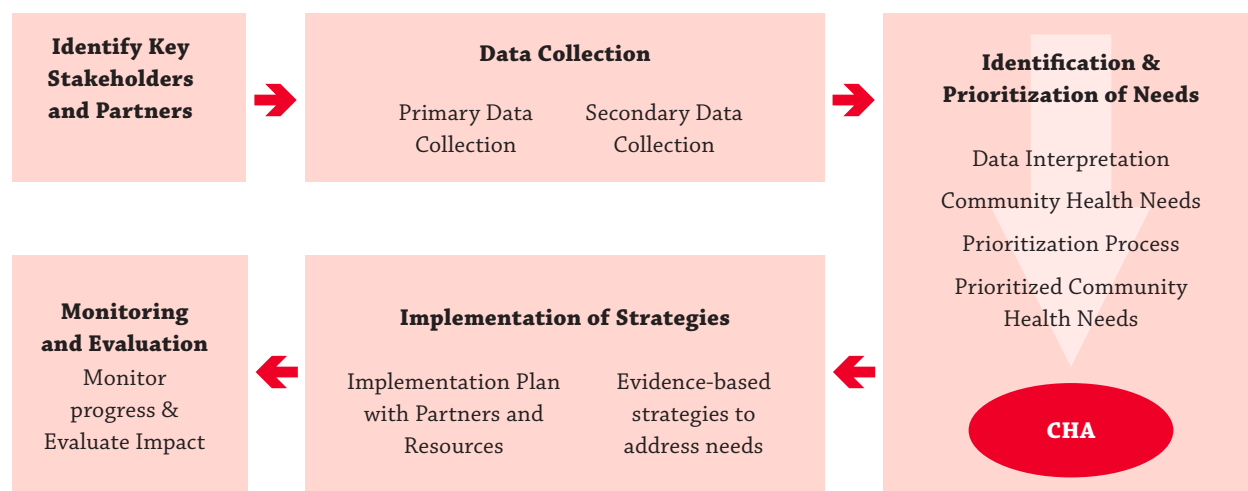


Community health improvement planning begins with diagnosing the health and wellbeing of its residents and workforce, analyzing the key community factors that impact the community's health, and from there, developing strategies for addressing the most pressing findings. This process of data-gathering is accomplished by conducting a **Community Health Assessment (CHA)**. Once the data are analyzed, strategies are developed with community partners for addressing the key challenges. These collective strategies are documented in a **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**. This community-driven approach ensures that interventions and solutions are tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of the local population, fostering a collaborative and responsive approach to enhancing community health.

## What is a CHA and CHIP?<sup>1</sup>

- A *Community Health Assessment* identifies key health challenges, needs, and strengths in a community through systematic, comprehensive data collection and analysis.
- A *Community Health Improvement Plan* is a strategic plan used by the Health Department and other governmental agencies, in collaboration with community partners, to set priorities and define actions to promote community health and wellbeing. These priorities are informed by the findings of the CHA.

## CHA & CHIP PROCESS



Graphic 1.: Adapted from the North Suffolk Regional Collaborative CHA

Many health departments lack the capacity or resources to engage in such a formal community health planning process, but thanks to federal and state funding, the Milton Health Department has been able to leverage the necessary resources to do so. This report summarizes the CHA's key findings which will guide the Town's health promotion efforts over the coming three to five years.

<sup>1</sup> CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/cha/plan.html>

# Milton's Community Health Planning Process

## Framework

The CHA process followed an assessment framework called Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP). This framework is promoted by the National Association of County and City Health Organizations, and consists of four separate assessments:

- Community Assets and Strengths Assessment
- Community Health Status Assessment
- Local Health System Assessment
- Forces of Change Assessment

## Addressing Health Disparities and Health Equity

Disparities in health status among specific populations have been widely documented in the public health literature. These differences may be

based on age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, race, and ethnicity, as well as by education or income. They are often a result of different and/or inequitable experiences or exposures within society that impact personal health and quality of life.

Where data was available, this CHA endeavored to examine any health differences between community cohorts that could be quantitatively or qualitatively documented. The purpose of examining these differences is to better understand if and why disparities occur in Milton so that new programs, policies and resources can promote health equity, with the goal of allowing everyone in town to have the opportunity to enjoy optimal health.

Unfortunately, there is sparse quantitative data available to describe these differences, except from a few local surveys and data from the U.S. Census. The CHA attempted to enhance this data through conducting key informant interviews, focus groups, and a Milton Community Health Survey.





## Examining the Social Determinants of Health

Because the community's health status is not only impacted by the quality and availability of medical care, but is also determined by local social, economic, and political factors, the CHA examined data which describe the *Social Determinants of Health*.

### WHAT ARE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH?

Social determinants of Health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

*CDC, Healthy People 2030*

## Community Engagement

Involving community members in the community health improvement planning process is an important principle for effectively promoting public health. The Milton Health Department has been committed to engaging community members in the CHA and CHIP planning process in several ways: First, a Community Advisory Group was created to provide ongoing feedback and input on the development of the CHA and CHIP. (Members are listed in the Acknowledgements section.) This group was comprised of the Board members of the Partnership for a Healthy Milton, a diverse group of residents committed to advancing health equity, and other community residents of all ages. Together, they adopted a *Milton CHA/CHIP Guiding Principles and Values* document to help guide their work together, which can be found on the Milton Health Department Website. The Milton Health Department also sought out robust community input through a comprehensive qualitative data collection process, consisting of individual and group interviews of diverse residents, community leaders, and Town officials.

## Methodology

The Milton CHA collected quantitative and qualitative data to better understand the key health conditions, challenges, needs, and risk behaviors that may impact the public's health and wellbeing, and to identify what health resources and assets exist to further support and strengthen community health.

The data were collected using a mixed-method approach, drawing on both primary (data the Health Department collects) and secondary data (collected from other sources). Milton-specific data were used whenever possible; however, when town-level data were unavailable, Norfolk county-level data were examined.

# Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

**Quantitative Data** are measurable data that are gathered from statistical records, reports and surveys. Examples of quantitative data sources are as follows:

- **Federal and State Government Data** U.S. Census 2020, American Community Survey 2021 & 2022, MA Department of Public Health (e.g., MA Community Health Data Tool), MA Department of Transportation, MA Department of Environmental Protection.
  - **Municipal and County Data** Town of Milton Departments such as Health Department, Public School System, Planning and Community Development, Engineering, Public Works, Council on Aging, Police & Fire, Human Resources, County Health Rankings, MA Water Resources Authority.
  - **Professional Organizations** March of Dimes, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, American Lung Association, Transformative Healthcare, Milton Residents Fund, Milton Food Pantry, Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton, and America's Health Rankings annual report by the United Health Foundation
  - **Needs Assessments and Reports** The Milton Coalition's Needs Assessment, the BID Milton Hospital's Community Health Assessment, the Select Board's Equity and Social Justice for All Committee's Report, multiple reports produced by the Department of Community Planning and Development, a needs assessment conducted by the Milton Early Childhood Alliance, as well as an Age Friendly Milton report produced by the UMass Boston Gerontology Institute were all referred to.
- 
- **Surveys** The results of four online surveys were examined:
    1. *Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital Community Health Survey (BID Milton Survey)*. The BID Milton recently conducted their own CHA of their primary service area which included Quincy and Randolph in 2022 and provided the Milton Health Department with the Milton-specific quantitative and qualitative data they collected, which were widely referenced in this report. They also provided Milton Health Department with the Milton-specific anonymous responses collected from their community online survey of 200 Milton residents in 2022.
    2. *Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*. The Milton Coalition worked with the Milton Public Schools to administer the YRBS health survey to middle and high school students in 2022. Lynch Research Associates analyzed the results, and the key results are available on the Milton Public Schools' website.  
<https://www.miltonps.org/school-committee/sc-presentations>  
The YRBS is a well-regarded assessment of youth health risk behaviors and perceptions of social norms that has been administered to 9-12th grade youth across the United States since 1990. The current report summarizes results from 940 MHS students who completed the survey in April of 2022 and compares patterns of health risk behaviors and perceptions of social norms among MHS students in 2022 to patterns found among students statewide and MHS students in 2019. Some data from the middle school survey were also referenced.

3. *Parent Survey.* The Milton Coalition disseminated a survey to Milton Public School parents in the Fall of 2022, focusing on the topic of youth substance use and mental health. Approximately 80% of the ~250 total respondents identified as female, about 85% were between the ages of 35-54, and 82% identified as White. Additionally, 41% of respondents were K-5 parents; 29% were middle school parents; and 30% were high school parents. Two specific health questions were added to this survey for the purposes of informing this CHA to better understand parents' concerns about youth health issues overall and to learn about the ease of access to needed health information.
4. *Milton Health Department Community Health Survey (Milton Community Health Survey).* The Milton Health Department conducted its own anonymous online survey of Milton adult residents during the summer of 2023. The survey focused on adults because there was already robust data on youth from the 2022 YRBS. The results are interspersed throughout this report. There were 410 completed responses; 72% of the respondents were female and 28% were male; 66% were adults aged 18-64, and 34% were ages 65+, about 8% identified as LGBTQIA+; and 83% identified as White/Caucasian, 6% Black/African American, 5% Multi-racial, 2% Caribbean, 2% Asian, 1% Hispanic/Latino, .2% American Indian/Alaska Native.

**Qualitative Data** are more descriptive data meant to elicit information and suggestions directly from community members through more open-ended individual and group interviews. Qualitative data are gathered to see if there are patterns or themes that arise within similar or across different groups of people that can enhance the information mined through the quantitative data collection process, and to elicit ideas for how to address identified health challenges. Sources of qualitative data include:

- **Key Informant (KII)/ Interviews** are one on one conversations with diverse town residents, leaders, and town officials.
- **Focus Groups** are group discussions with similar constituencies in the community.

**17**

**Key Informant Interviews**

with diverse residents, leaders and workforce

**410**

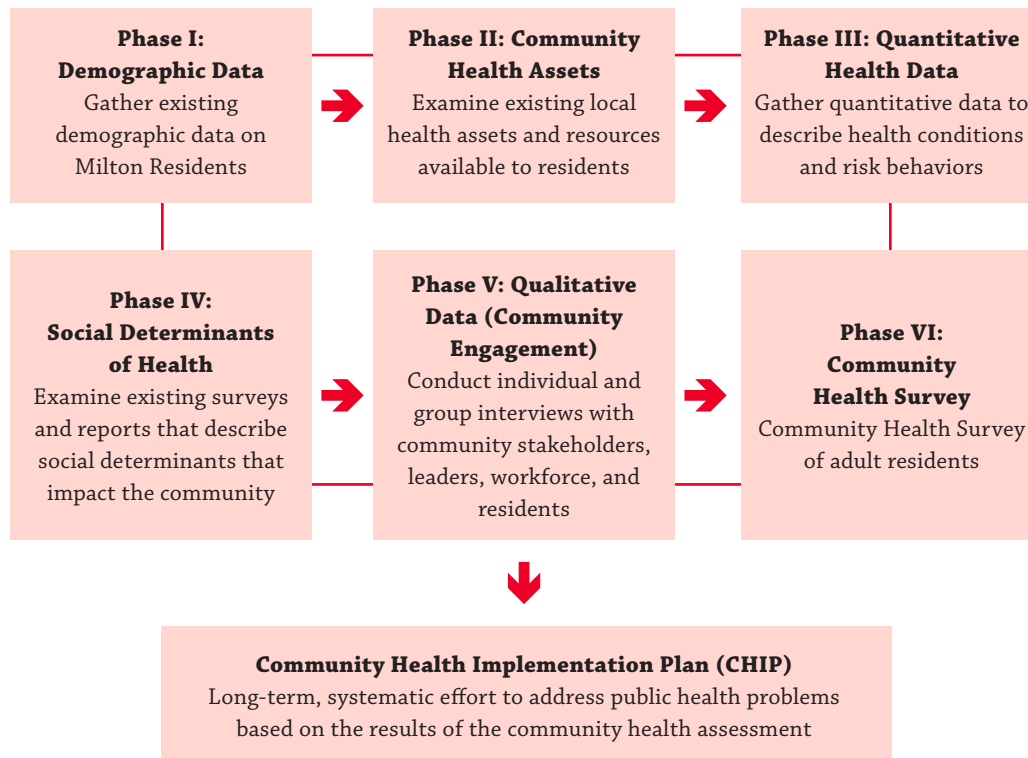
**Community Health Survey Responses from Milton Adults**

**8**

**Focus Groups**

- First Responders
- Milton Public School Leaders
- Older Residents
- Residents of Color
- Milton Teens
- Community Advisory Group
- Milton Interfaith Clergy Association
- Town Employees

The data were collected in phases, as the following graph depicts.



More detailed information about the Qualitative Data Collection Methodology can be found in Appendix A. The Milton Community Health Survey questions and results can also be found on the Milton Health Department website.

<https://ma-milton.civicplus.com/260/Miltons-Community-Health-Assessment-CHA>



## Limitations

This Community Health Assessment is not considered to be a scientific study. For a scientific study all data used for the CHA would have been collected during the exact same period and surveys used would have used the exact same wording for accurate comparisons. However, due to the variety of data sources used, this standardization was not possible. Moreover, due to the nature of public health research, some of the data were older than ideally desired, but they are the most up to date data available at the time of compiling this report.

Where feasible, quantitative data were analyzed by gender, age groups, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity, but frequently these more granular data were unavailable. This lack of population specific data is important to acknowledge since subgroups of residents may experience health and wellbeing differently than the overall population. It should also be noted that most secondary data sources used binary gender categories (male/female) and did not capture the experiences of those who identify as non-binary.

While qualitative data are helpful in gaining authentic and contextual insights into community-based health needs and solutions, they are also imperfect. One reason is that they are difficult to characterize quantitatively, unless very structured interview processes are used. For this CHA, semi-structured interview guides were developed which allow for flexibility in guiding conversations and ascertaining unique perspectives among individuals and groups. However, the flexibility also makes the analysis less rigorous. Finally, due to the use of convenience-sampling (non-randomized) recruitment techniques for surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the participants may not perfectly reflect Milton's demographic profile for age, race, gender, etc.

# Community Health Assessment Findings

## Who Lives in Milton, Massachusetts?

Milton, Massachusetts is a growing and desirable community located in Norfolk County and bordering the city of Boston. Its land mass is approximately 13 square miles. Established in 1640, the Town prides itself on its historical heritage, its easy access to both the city and the natural environment, its overall safety record, and the diversity of its population. The Milton Public Schools educate approximately 4,400 students and there are many other private and parochial schools, and colleges within and around the Town.

Milton is categorized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council as an “Established Suburb”. These communities are characterized by mostly owner-occupied single-family homes on lots less than one acre.



## Community Profile

The following demographic data describe residents living in Milton, Massachusetts and were derived from the U.S. Decennial Census, 2020 and the American Community Survey in 2022 for zip code 02186. Occasionally, Milton rates are compared to the state of Massachusetts rates in the same year.

In 2020, there were 28,630 residents living in Milton as compared to 27,003 residents in 2010. The number of households also increased in that time-period, from 9,272 in 2010 to 9,484 in 2020.<sup>2</sup>

In 2022, Milton's diverse residential racial and ethnic profile was as follows: White, non-Hispanic residents (71%) and non-White residents (29%). People of color identified primarily as Black, Asian, or of mixed-race backgrounds. Nearly 4% of residents

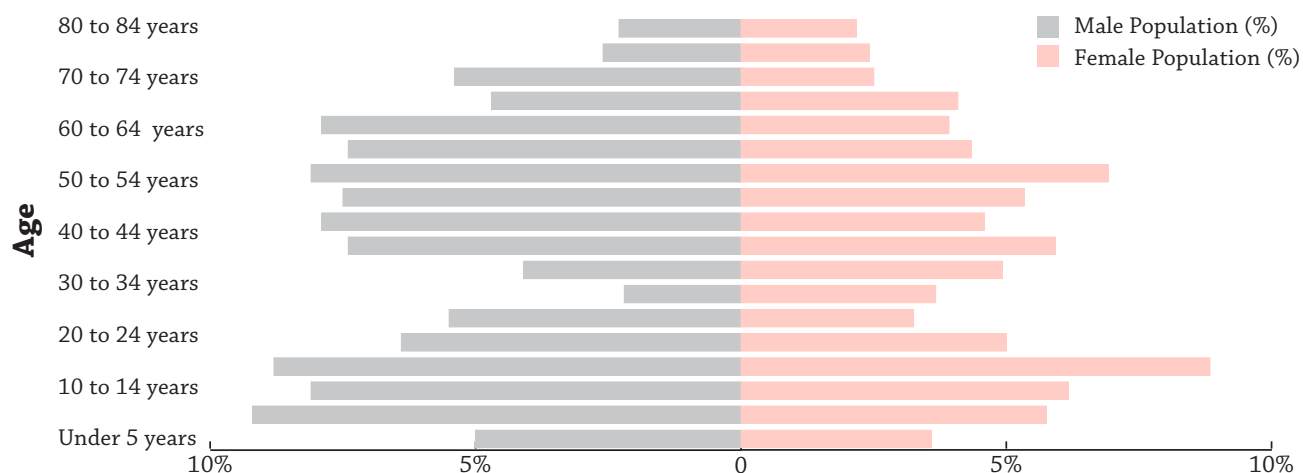
identify as Hispanic/Latino, of any race. The percentage of foreign-born Milton residents increased from 2012 to 2022 (12% to 16%), originating mostly from Latin America, Asia, and Europe, though 99% of Milton residents are U.S. citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Milton's overall socioeconomic status in 2022 compares favorably to the state, especially regarding income and school graduation rates. For example, the median household income was significantly higher in Milton than in the state (\$170,144 vs \$94,488). Those holding at least a bachelor's degree were also higher than the state (68% vs. 47%), and the rate of those holding a graduate or professional degree was higher than the state (36% vs 21%), and substantially increased since 2012.<sup>4</sup>

## Age (ACS, 2022)

### POPULATION DISTRIBUTION MILTON MA

American Community Survey, 2022



- The median age of Milton residents is 40.
- The percentage of children under 19 years old represents 30% of the population. The percentage of children under 19 living in Milton is substantially higher than the state average (30% vs 22%).
- Milton older adults 65+ comprise less of the total Milton population than the state average in 2022 (16% vs 18.1%). However, their percentage increased from the period 2012 to 2022 (14.5% vs.16%). This growth trend is projected to continue rapidly and older adults are expected to represent 30% of Milton's total population by 2030 (Donahue Institute, UMass Boston).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Decennial Census, 2020

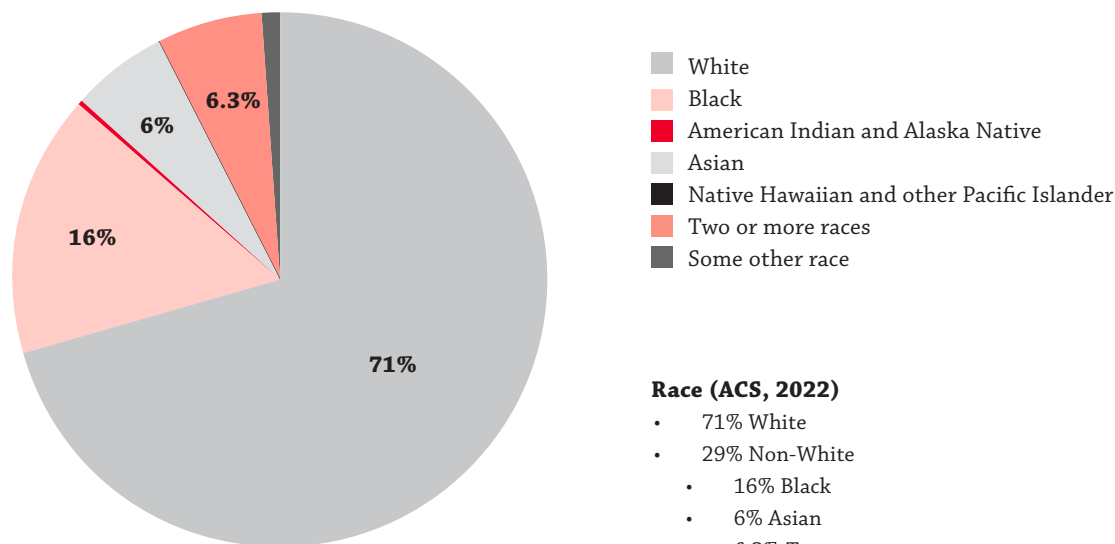
<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey, 2012 and 2022

<sup>4</sup> American Community Survey, 2012 and 2022

## Race and Ethnicity (2022, ACS)

### RACIAL DISTRIBUTION MILTON MA

American Community Survey, 2022



#### Race (ACS, 2022)

- 71% White
- 29% Non-White
  - 16% Black
  - 6% Asian
  - 6.3% Two or more races
  - 0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native
  - 0.1% Pacific Islander
  - 1% Some other race

#### Ethnicity (2022)

- 3.7% Hispanic/Latino of any race

**3.7%**

of Milton Residents Identify as Hispanic or Latino  
ACS - 2022

## Languages (2022)



**1 in 5 Milton residents  
speak a language other than  
English at home**

- Of those households with residents five years or older, 19% spoke a language at home other than English. However, 4% of these households have limited English proficiency.
- The most frequently spoken languages other than English included “Other Indo-European” (which can include Haitian/French Creole), Asian dialects, and Spanish languages.
- The most frequently requested translation services from families enrolled in the Milton Public Schools are the languages of Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Mandarin/Other Chinese/Vietnamese (MPS ELL data).



To gain a more nuanced understanding of the diverse languages and cultures reflected in Milton's foreign-born population, the following Table was provided by the MA Community Health Data Tool (MCHDT), accessed January 2024)

Report Area	Rank	Country	Percentage
Milton town, Norfolk County, Massachusetts	1	Haiti	34.61%
	2	Jamaica	9.84%
	3	China, excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan	6.63%
	4	Trinidad and Tobago	6.09%
	5	Ireland	4.00%
	6	Hong Kong	2.83%
	7	Vietnam	2.76%
	8	Germany	2.11%
	9	United Kingdom, excluding England and Scotland	2.02%
	9	Sierra Leone	2.02%

## Income and Poverty (2022)<sup>5</sup>

While Milton's median household income is high compared to the state and nation, with about 70% of households earning above the state median, there are significant income disparities within the town. For example, about 30% of Milton households earned below the state's median annual income level of \$94,500, while 42% were in the highest bracket, earning over \$200,000 per year. There were 3,537 low-income residents living under 200% of the poverty line, representing about 13% of those Milton residents counted by the ACS in 2022, and about 6% of Milton residents lived below the federal poverty line.

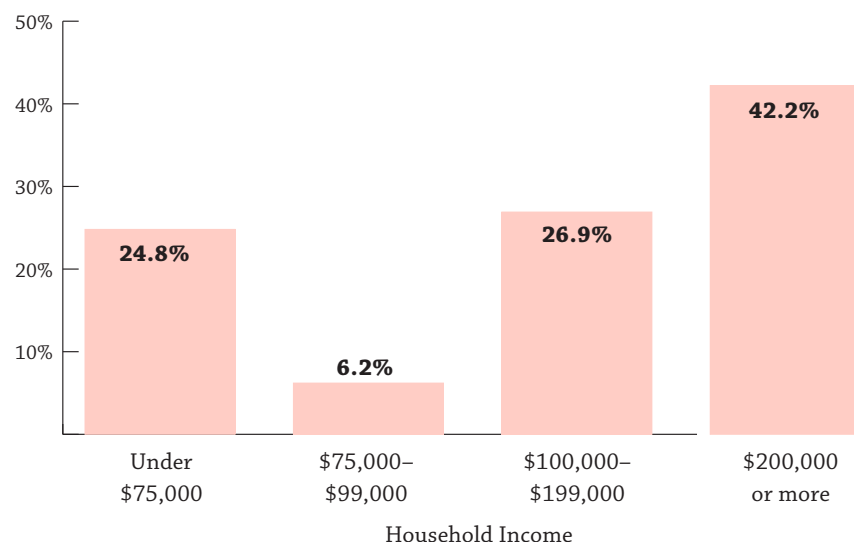
The poverty rate has been growing in Milton over the past decade and affects the following populations disproportionately:

- *Age Groups:* The age groups most affected are residents over the age of 65 and young adults ages 18-34, both at about 9% of these age cohorts.
- *Racial/Ethnic Groups:* Black residents have disproportionately higher rates of poverty, at 17%.

Federal Poverty Levels can be found in Appendix B

## HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS MILTON MA

American Community Survey, 2022



Other demographic data about Milton residents appear throughout this report.

## Community Assets & Strengths Assessment

### Overview

Identifying community services and assets is an important part of the CHA process because they can be used as a basis for community health improvement. Understanding these resources makes it easier to understand what kinds of programs and partners might be mobilized to address the community's health needs moving forward.

Below is an overview of the range of Town social services and cultural resources available to Milton residents. Additional school-based resources can be found on the various public and private schools' websites. A more detailed Town Resource Guide (2022) can be found on the Milton Health Department's website.

<https://www.townofmilton.org/232/Health-Department>

### a. Social Services

In addition to community social services being offered by a licensed clinical social worker at the Milton Health Department, the following specialized social services are also offered by various other entities in and around town.

#### *DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES*

The Milton Police Department provides resources and support for individuals and families within the community who have suffered from intimate partner and family violence. In the calendar year 2021, there were 166 police department domestic violence responses. MPD has a Domestic Violence Officer and a Civilian Domestic Violence Advocate embedded within

the department.

#### *FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE*

Housing, food, childcare, transportation and other necessities are costly for some Milton families. There are a variety of reduced-cost services from state and local government, local faith and community organizations, local food pantries and farms, foundations, and town

departments. For example, since COVID-19, the Milton Public School district has been making available free breakfasts and lunch to every student interested in partaking, supported by supplementary funds from the state budget. Additionally, there is a senior tax work-off program, making older homeowners (60+) eligible for a \$1,500 rebate, after being screened by the Council on Aging for eligibility.

To address food insecurity, Milton's Farmers Market and Brookwood Community Farm accept and support state vouchers (e.g., SNAP, HIP and WIC) to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables. Some vendors at the Farmer's Market also accept "senior" (60+) coupons. There are also two local food pantries, located at local churches. The Milton Community Food Pantry (located in the Parkway United Methodist Church) alone serves approximately 560 residents, of which about 160 residents are children and about 100 are older adults. The Concord Baptist Church food pantry (located in the Concord Baptist Church) is another resource for Milton residents.

The Milton Early Childhood Alliance (MECA)

provides families with access to information on early childcare services and information on how to receive childcare financial assistance.

There are several town positions in Milton dedicated to assisting low-income residents in need such as a Family Outreach Liaison at the Milton Public Schools, and Outreach Coordinators at the Council on Aging and at Milton Residences for the Elderly.

In addition, the Milton Residents Fund may provide grants and aid to Milton residents and families, depending on individual situations and the trustees' discretion.

The Milton Housing Authority (MHA) provides affordable housing opportunities for older residents (60+) and the young disabled (under 60 with a disability) for a total of 42 tenants. MHA has 12 family apartments with a total of 35 tenants. They also administer 2 group homes, one with 6 bedrooms and one with 5 bedrooms totaling 11 tenants. Federal support provides MHA with housing vouchers for Milton and other communities; 8 are utilized by Milton low-income residents.

## **b. Services for Special Populations**

### *VETERAN SERVICES*

About 5% of residents are military veterans (ACS 2021). Milton's Veteran Services is located at the Council on Aging and has in-person availability twice a week, on Tuesdays & Thursdays. The Veteran's Agent provides counseling and advice to assist veterans and their families with services needed from local, state, and federal resources, as well as provides mobile phone availability upon request for those eligible. The town honors its veterans in many ways, and Milton is designated as a *Purple Heart Community*.

### *SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS*

Milton provides a range of services for those aged 60+, including public and private housing communities, and limited van services for those with transportation needs to access such necessities as food and medical care.

Milton's Council on Aging (COA) provides a growing set of health and human service programs, as well as social activities for the town's older residents. COA demographic statistics reveal that a growing number of older residents are using their services and are of more diverse backgrounds. The

COA's outreach staff offer information and referral services on housing, health care, Medicare enrollment, home health care, homemaking, transportation, fuel assistance, nutrition as well as legal and financial matters. In 2022, most requests were for home health care and other referrals, housing assistance, and social services. A growing number of social activities are also offered such as coffee hours, cribbage, knitting, mahjong, card games, sketching, watercolor, tech support, ukulele, and much more. Health and Wellness classes include chair yoga, core strength, hiking, line dancing, strength training, Tai Chi, walking, ZUMBA gold, and reflexology. Appreciation of the COA was mentioned in the Focus Groups as a valuable community resource.

Milton's Public Library provides a very popular book delivery service to homebound residents at no cost. Books will be delivered and returned from homes with no fines or fees. There are also affordable *lifelong learning opportunities* at local universities, such as University of Massachusetts-Boston for as young as age 50 or older.

The Milton Police Department also has an

Elder Affairs Officer who specializes in addressing issues such as identity theft, financial exploitation, marketing scams, and abuse.

There are a number of housing options for older residents, but there are waiting lists. *Milton Residences for the Elderly* (MRE) is a non-profit management company, created in 1968 by the Milton-Mattapan Clergy Association, to provide affordable housing and elderly care. MRE manages two sites in Milton- Unquity House providing affordable units and Winter Valley providing assisted living residences-offering an array of support services that encourage and enable an independent lifestyle. Fuller Village is a private non-profit independent living community in Milton that has both privately owned apartments and villas, and some rental apartments. Fuller Village provides their residents with a comprehensive set of amenities, including dining. Some properties are available at below market rate.

*Housing Opportunities for Milton Elderly* (HOME Inc) is another housing complex, consisting of individual residences with a community center, off of Blue Hills Parkway.

Milton is deemed to be an emerging *Dementia-Friendly Community*, and it is a desire of the COA Director to achieve “Age Friendly Community” status by AARP and the MA Healthy Aging Collaborative.

#### YOUTH AFTER-SCHOOL SERVICES

The Select Board created a Youth Task Force to recommend opportunities for the Town to better address the needs of Milton’s youth. The student voice is amplified in the community through an activist teen community group, Milton Youth Advocates for Change (MYAC), which is sponsored by The Milton Coalition.

Currently, the town supplements school offerings by offering a wide variety of youth sports programs and middle school field trips through the Parks and Recreation Department. Financial assistance

is available for families that qualify through the Milton Residents Fund. A dozen scholarships were provided for camp Cunningham this year. Sports programs are also offered through leagues, after school programs, and camps. There are also community-based cultural, recreational, and educational programs offered for children and youth at the public library, museums, private and public schools, Town parks, the Cunningham Foundation, and at the Milton Art Center.

The Wildcat Den is a designated space at the First Congregational Church meant for Milton Teens in grades 6 to 8 to hang out after the school day, with supervised programming for those youth who attend.

#### LGBTQIA+ SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Through gathering qualitative data, the need for LGBTQIA+ resources are important to many community members. Focus group participants and school personnel also reported that there are growing numbers of transgender youth. A focus group participant emphasized that knowing how to support gender identity and sexual orientation impacts health outcomes. There are some LGBTQIA+ resources that can be found in the community, as well as more established programs nearby, such as at Fenway Health Center in Boston and the Family Resource Center in Quincy.

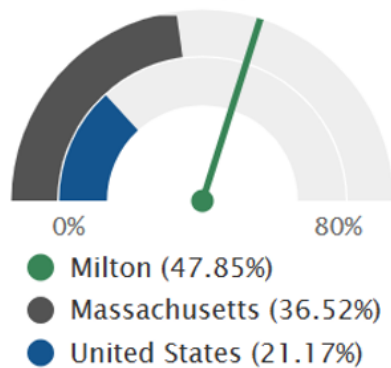
#### DISABLED RESIDENTS

The Commission on Disability promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. They are established by town meeting or city council vote. The Commission monitors and offers information about a range of accessibility and other resources for those who experience physical challenges due to illness or injury. They provide resources, as well as monitor and make recommendations on how to make town services more accessible. The town also appoints an Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator.

### c. Natural and Built Environment Resources

The natural resources that comprise Milton's landscape were highlighted as a valued community feature in many of the community conversations. These natural spaces offer an environment for community members to engage in physical activity and support mental wellbeing.

Population Weighted Percentage  
of Report Area Covered by Tree  
Canopy



Indeed, Milton has more tree canopy than the average community in the state or nation, according to the National Land Cover Database.

Town government has numerous departments whose missions impact the natural and physical environments experienced by residents. For example, the Planning & Community Development Department addresses expanded opportunities for healthier living such as active transportation and recreation, safer roadways, affordable housing, and sustainability measures. Parks and Recreation plan a variety of programs primarily for youth and manage 117 acres of land, 15 town parks and also sponsor a summer concert series. Public Works and Building Facilities promote healthy indoor and outdoor environments through a variety of recycling, air and water monitoring programs, integrated pest management, solar energy, and tree planting projects in collaboration with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee. The Town is currently updating its Open Space and Recreation plan for the first time in 15 years, to set priorities for active and passive recreation conservation and programming.

### d. CULTURAL and SOCIAL ASSETS

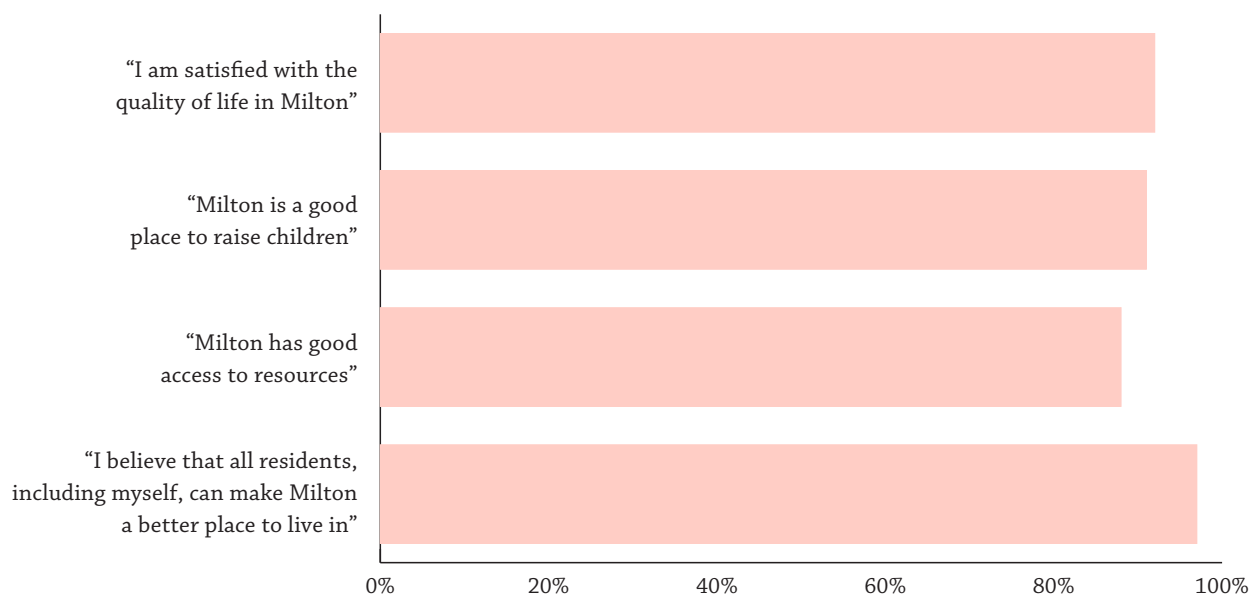
Milton is fortunate to have exceptionally safe neighborhoods, a rich history and historic structures, strong public and private school options, and a variety of cultural and arts programming.

Milton is a community where many residents volunteer their time and provide financial donations and programs to augment educational, arts, recreational, conservation, fitness, health, and other group programming within the town. The Milton Arts Center is one of many resources. Moreover, various charities generously supplement town offerings, such as the Copeland Foundation, the Milton Foundation for Education, the Milton Woman's Club, Milton Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Faith Communities, and the Milton Library Foundation.

Not surprisingly, the BID Milton Survey (2022) illustrates that most residents feel positively connected to the community.



## BID MILTON SURVEY OF MILTON RESIDENTS - 2022



There are also Town initiatives promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), which is a documented social determinant of health. Bonding over similar and different ethnicities and cultures can be a truly enriching experience, allowing neighbors to learn about perspectives and traditions from around the world. The Town of Milton is designated as a “No Place for Hate” community. The Select Board has established an Equity and Justice for All Advisory Committee to increase attention to DEI in its civic life and in town government. Similarly, the Milton Public School district has devoted staff and resources to addressing diversity in academic achievement and inclusion. There are a few civic and faith groups devoted to promoting racial equity in town including, but not limited to, Citizens for a Diverse Milton, “Courageous Conversations” in partnership with the Milton Interfaith Clergy Association, MYAC, and the Milton Anti-Racist Coalition.

### Summary

The community’s assets and strengths are important indicators of overall community health and wellbeing. Many residents feel fortunate to live in the community.

Although most Milton residents have desired resources at their disposal, it is important to be mindful that there are other residents who experience greater challenges in accessing them. Focus groups have uniformly indicated that there is a lack of a robust centralized information hub in the town, and that there is a need for expanded proactive outreach to the more isolated and marginalized households who may be in more need of culturally appropriate and affordable services.

# Community Health Status Assessment

This section describes the overall health status of Milton residents as well as the health status of subpopulations, where information is available. Detailed data on specific health indicators and community risk factors are also provided. Topics include physical and behavioral health measures, morbidity and mortality rates, and the social determinants of health.

## Health Status by Age Groups

While Milton's overall health status compares favorably to the state and nation, this does not mean that residents are without health burdens. Chronic diseases (such as asthma and diabetes), alcohol use, obesity/overweight, and mental health are health conditions that impact all age groups most heavily in Milton. There are also health conditions that impact certain age groups in Milton more heavily.

### *YOUTH*

Overall, Milton public school teens fare the same or better than their statewide peers regarding most health and risk indicators, although drinking alcohol, using tobacco/vapes, and mental health measures are health issues of special concern. Racial and sexual minority teens appear to be particularly vulnerable to bullying and other behavioral health challenges. More detailed data can be found in the behavioral health section of the report.

Based on conversations with youth, parents, and other community members, as well as the results of survey data, the following community factors are of particular concern for Milton teens' health and wellbeing:

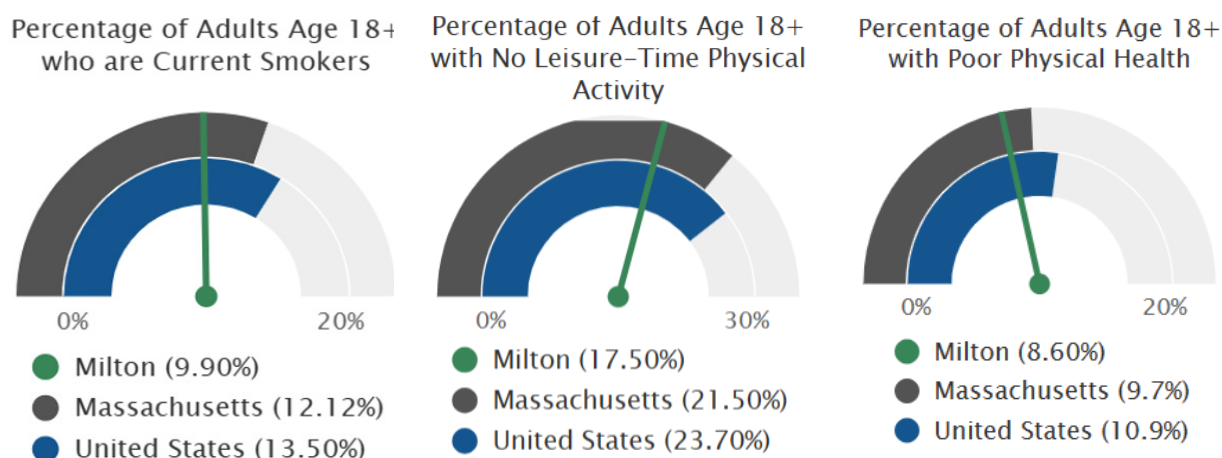
- Emotional Health and Insufficient Access to Adjustment Counselors
- Life Balance/Too Much Structure
- Academic and Social Pressures
- Substance Use Pressure
- Social Media and Screen Time
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Lack of Sleep
- Access to Healthy and Appetizing Foods
- Lack of Meaningful Physical/Emotional Health Education
- General State of the World

School survey data and interviews indicate that asthma, food allergies, mental health, and being overweight are the leading health conditions impacting students.

### ADULTS

The Massachusetts Community Health Data Tool (MCHDT) indicates that Milton's adult health status and risk behaviors in 2021 were generally favorable compared to the state and nation in the following areas: Life expectancy, general and physical health status, physical activity levels, smoking tobacco, and receiving routine medical check-ups. However, cancer incidence, binge drinking and overdose mortality were higher in Milton than either the state or the nation.

(<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-health-data>)



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool, 2021

According to the Milton Community Health Survey (2023), 91.2% reported that their general physical health is either excellent, very good or good, while 8.8% report fair or poor health. These survey results are similar to the state's MCHDT data. An impressive 98% of respondents reported they had a Primary Care Provider. While 56.3% of respondents indicated they experienced no major impairments or health conditions that impact their activities of daily living, the remainder reported that they do struggle with a significant health issue. The most common conditions reported were:

- Arthritis/Rheumatism (14.2%)
- Back or Neck Problems (13.9%)
- Overweight (12.9%)
- Depression/Anxiety/Emotional Problems (12.2%)
- Hypertension (9.8%)

When survey participants were asked to list the top five behaviors or circumstances that they believed have the greatest negative impacts on the community's health and wellbeing, the following factors emerged:

- Alcohol Use (48.2%)
- Drug Use (46.3%)
- Social Media/Screen Time (45.1%)
- Racism/Other forms of Discrimination (44.9%)
- Mental Health-Stress/Depression (39.8%)

These issues largely agree with the results of the CHA's quantitative and qualitative data.

Other health and safety issues of concern included:

- Distracted Driving (35.4%)
- Lack of Exercise (26.6%)
- Environmental Exposures (26.3%)
- Bullying/Harassment (24.6%)
- Poor Eating Habits (22.9%)

It should be noted that there were racial disparities in survey responses, with highlighted data indicating higher rates between white and residents of color.

Key Adult Health Indicators and Disparities (Milton Community Health Survey, 2023)		
Health Issue	% White Residents	% Residents of Color
Fair or Poor Health	8.6	10.6
Poor Mental Health (Household)	24.2	14.9
Insufficient Exercise	30.0	47.8
COVID-19: Emotional Effects	3.5	6.0
Substance Use Disorders in Household	5.3	1.5

## OLDER ADULTS

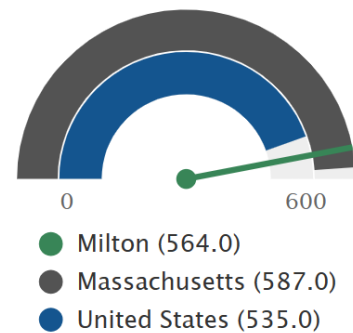
Most of the health indicators on older adults are derived from the 2018 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Profile Report, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and are estimated calculations for those who are 60 years of age or older. According to the report, “Older Milton residents have lower rates of obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, chronic kidney disease, fibromyalgia, and migraines than state averages. Moreover, Milton older adults are more likely to have cholesterol screenings and annual dental exams than their state counterparts. However, Milton older adults have higher rates of Alzheimer’s disease, peripheral vascular disease, arthritis, colon cancer, glaucoma, cataracts, and ulcers compared to state averages.”

Other health indicators of note for Milton older adults:

- Over 18% describe themselves as in fair or poor health
- Over 59% of older adults live with four or more chronic conditions
- Falls are the leading cause of emergency ambulance calls for older adults

The MCHDT indicates that residents 65+ have higher emergency department visits than the nation as a whole. This is significant because these visits require “high intensity” services that can burden both health care systems and patients and may indicate poor care management, inadequate access to care or poor patient choices.

Emergency Room (ER) Visits, Rate per 1,000 Medicare Beneficiaries



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool, 2020

## MILTON'S WORKFORCE

The Milton workforce and their families were treated most commonly for the following chronic conditions, based on non-identifiable insurance data provided by the Town of Milton Human Resource Director:

- Hypertension
- Obesity

The costliest insurance claims in fiscal year 2022 for the Milton workforce are from chronic diseases and conditions such as breast and prostate cancer, inflammatory bowel disease and diabetes.

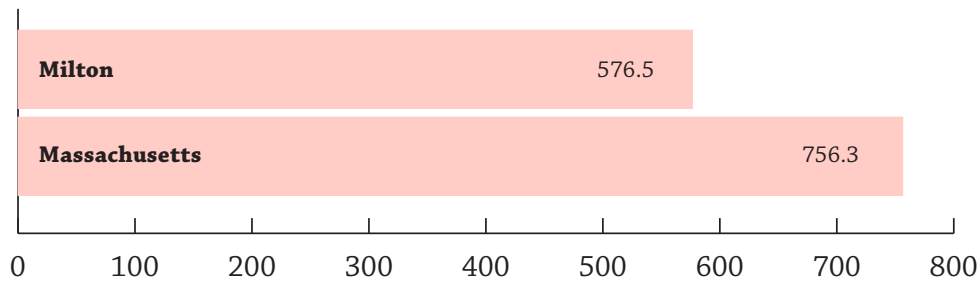
## Mortality Rates

The overall and premature mortality (death) rates in Milton are favorable compared to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (MA) as a whole. Mortality rates are age-adjusted to make comparisons with other communities. Premature mortality rates track unfulfilled life expectancy and are based on deaths prior to age 75. The rates are standardized per 100,000 people. Data is derived from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Death Report, 2020.



## MILTON VS. MASSACHUSETTS AGE-ADJUSTED MORTALITY RATE

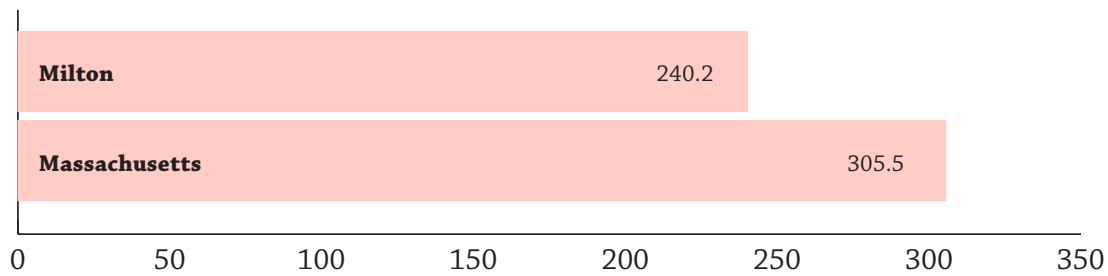
MDPH, 2020



Age-Adjusted Mortality Rate per 100,000

## MILTON VS. MASSACHUSETTS AGE-ADJUSTED PREMATURE MORTALITY RATE

MDPH, 2020



Age-Adjusted Mortality Rate per 100,000

In addition to the total number of deaths in Milton in 2020, the Massachusetts Death Report also tracks selected causes of death by community.

### Total Number of Milton Deaths, 2020

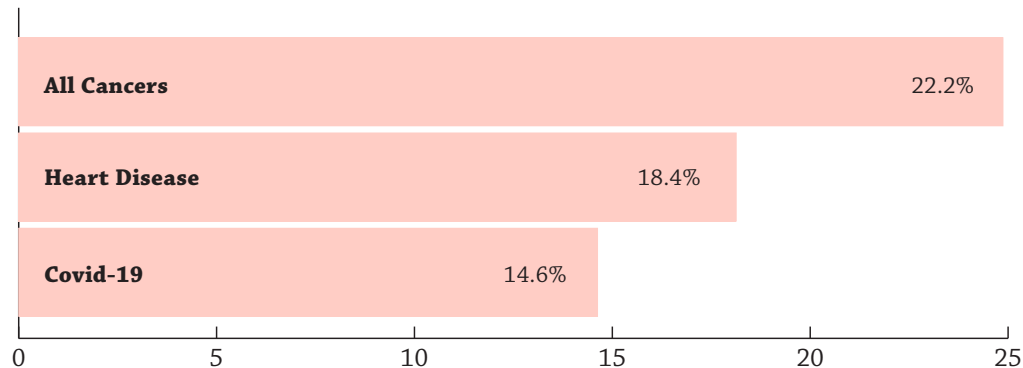
- Total Deaths: # 239
- Premature Deaths (prior to age 75): # 85

### Selected Causes of Death in Milton, 2020

- All Cancers: # 53
- Heart Disease: # 44
- COVID-19: # 35
- Stroke: # 12
- Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease: # 7
- Influenza & Pneumonia: # 4
- Suicide: # 4
- Diabetes: # 3
- Opioid-Related: # 2
- Motor Vehicle: # 1
- Homicide: # 1

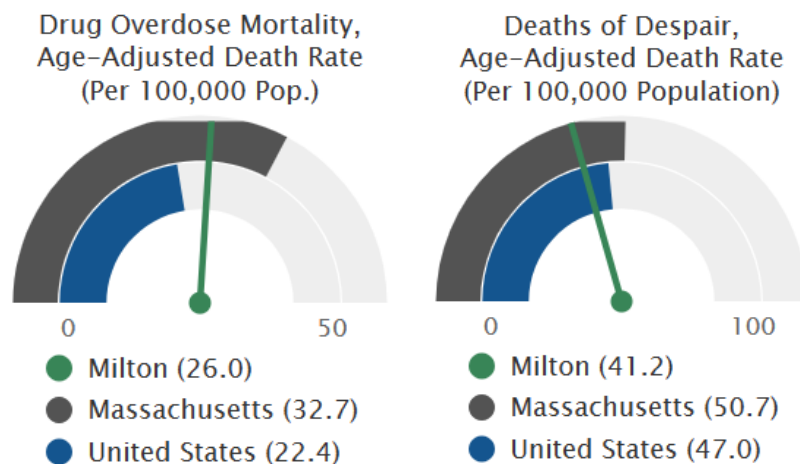
## TOP THREE CAUSES OF DEATH MILTON

MDPH, 2020



The statewide leading causes of mortality mirror the top three causes in Milton: Cancers, Heart Disease, and COVID-19. It should be noted that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, stroke was the third leading cause of death in Milton; it is currently the fourth leading cause. According to the MCHDT, in 2021, 2.6% of Milton adults have ever suffered a stroke.

It should also be noted that “deaths of despair”—or deaths involving suicide, drug overdose or alcohol-related illnesses—are increasing across the country and in Milton as well, according to the Milton Police Department. Between 2016-2020, 60 Milton residents died from deaths of despair, of which 36 residents died of a substance overdose (MCHDT, 2021).



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool (2016-2020)

# Morbidity Rates

## Maternal and Infant Health Indicators

Key maternal and infant health indicators derive from various national organizations, but they are only available at the county level and they represent varying time periods. That said, Norfolk County rates compare favorably to the state.

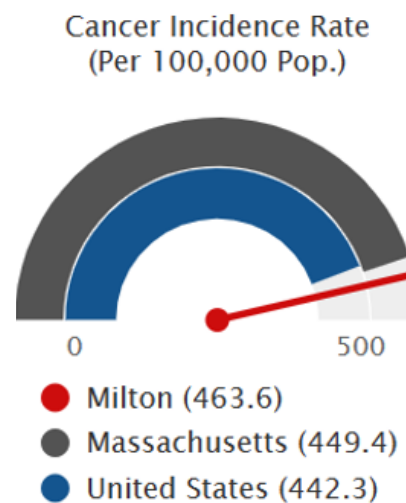
*Preterm birth rates* (2022) and *infant mortality rates* (2020) are provided by the March of Dimes. *Low birth rates* are provided by the County Health Rankings (2014-2020, combined). Feedback from the Community Advisory Group suggested that prepartum and postpartum resources to support new parents in Milton are lacking.

Maternal & Infant Health Indicators	Norfolk County	MA
Preterm Births (before 36 weeks)	8.2%	9.0%
Low Birthweight (under 5.8 lbs)*	7.0%	7.5%
Infant Mortality (deaths/1,000 live births)	3.3	3.9

\*There were 153 low birthweight births in Milton between 2014-2020, representing 7% of live births during that period. (MCHDT)

## Cancer Incidence:

The most recent data on cancer rates in Milton was for the five-year period between 2016-2020. This Milton data examined *overall* cancer rates, as well as prostate and lung cancer types. Data on other cancer types was not available during this period. The results indicated that overall cancer rates and prostate cancer rates in Milton were higher than both the state and the nation; lung cancers in Milton were higher than just the nation. During this five-year period, there was an annual average of 165 new cancer cases reported.



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool, 2021

Between 2011-2015, a more comprehensive and detailed examination of all major cancer types in Milton was conducted by the MDPH Cancer Registry. During that earlier period, overall cancer rates were statistically higher than expected for Milton females, but not for males. Breast and thyroid cancers in Milton women were specifically higher than expected. Also, during that period, melanomas were higher than expected for both Milton men and women. Because of the lack of current data on these cancer types, we do not know if these cancers continue to trend at high rates in Milton beyond 2015.

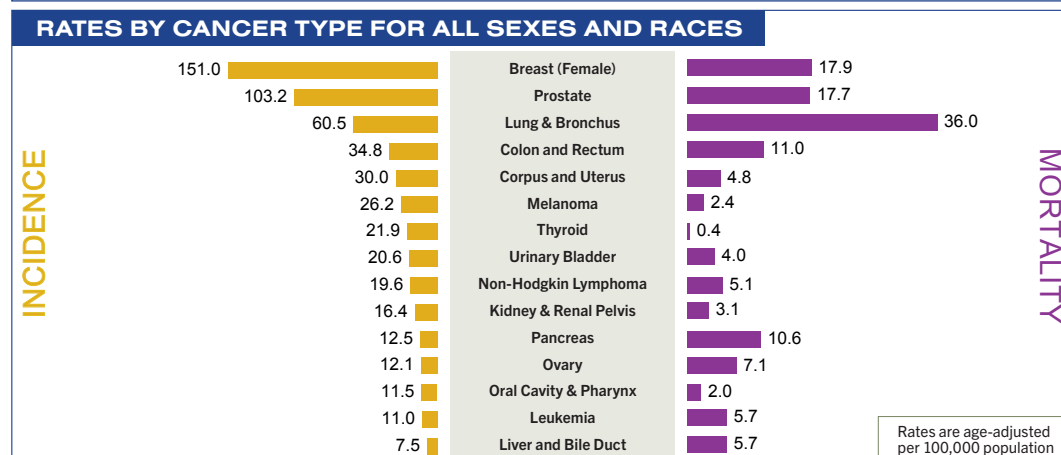
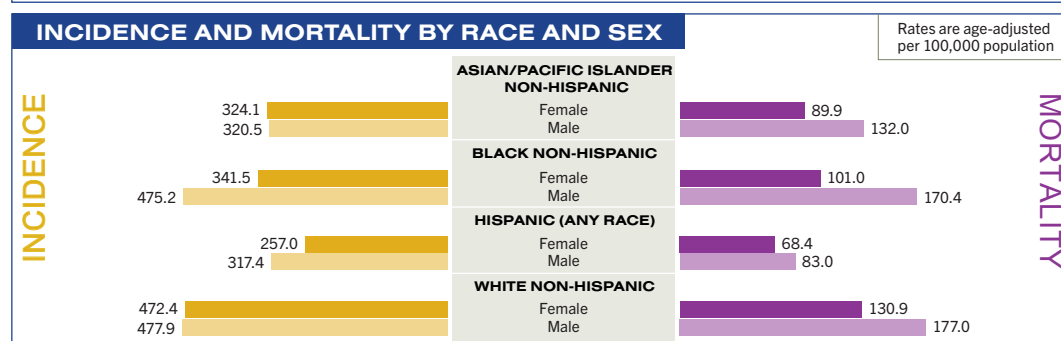
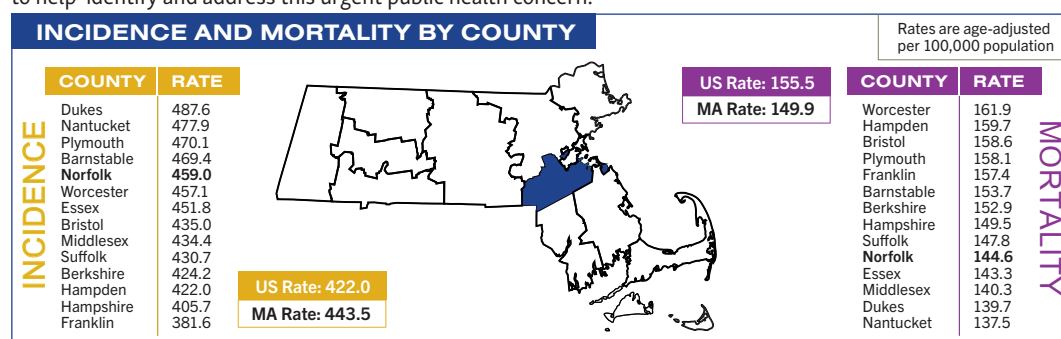
The MA Cancer Registry published 2017 cancer data for Norfolk County. Like Milton, the county's overall cancer incidence rates were higher than the state and nation, but the county's cancer death rates were lower. The most common cancers in Norfolk County in that year were breast, prostate and lung cancers. White and Black non-Hispanic males had the highest rates of cancer incidence and mortality.

## MASSACHUSETTS CANCER REGISTRY - 2017 DATA

# MA CANCER FACT SHEET: NORFOLK COUNTY

## INCIDENCE & MORTALITY IN MASSACHUSETTS

MA Cancer Fact Sheets provide information about disparities in cancer rates among Massachusetts residents, to help identify and address this urgent public health concern.

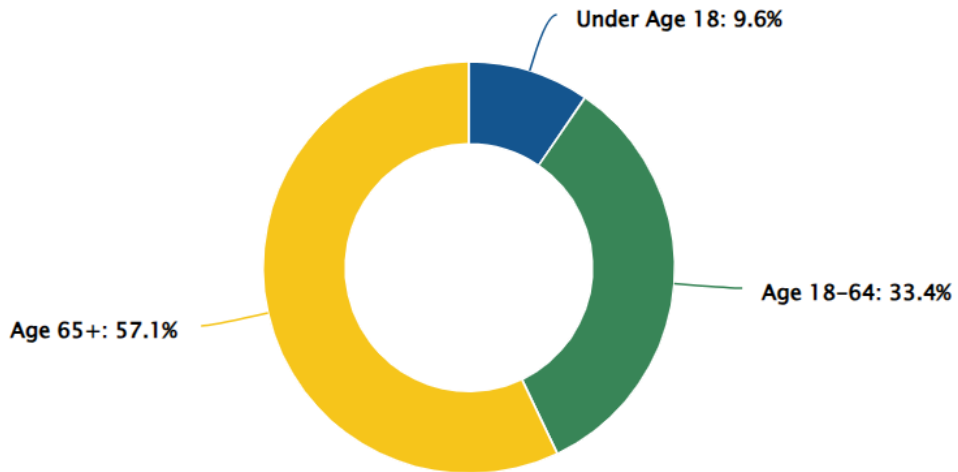


Source: <https://cancerinmass.org>

## Disabilities

The prevalence of disabilities overall and by age group in Milton are lower than the state rates.

### POPULATION WITH ANY DISABILITY BY AGE GROUP, TOTAL

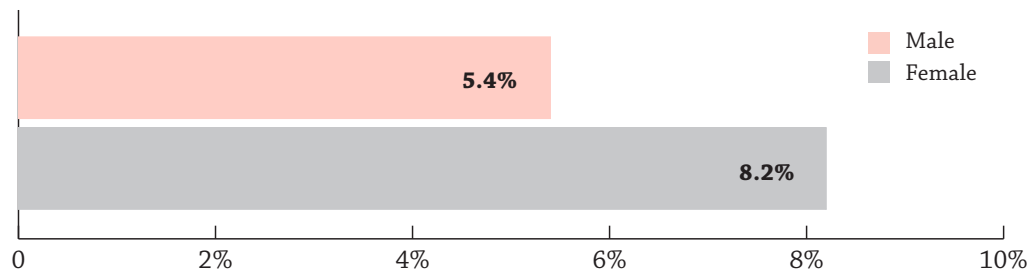


Source: ACS, 2018-2022

Women in Milton experience disabilities more frequently than men. In addition, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian American residents had elevated rates of disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

### PERCENT OF MILTON RESIDENTS WITH A DISABILITY BY SEX

American Community Survey, 2021



6 American Community Survey, 2021

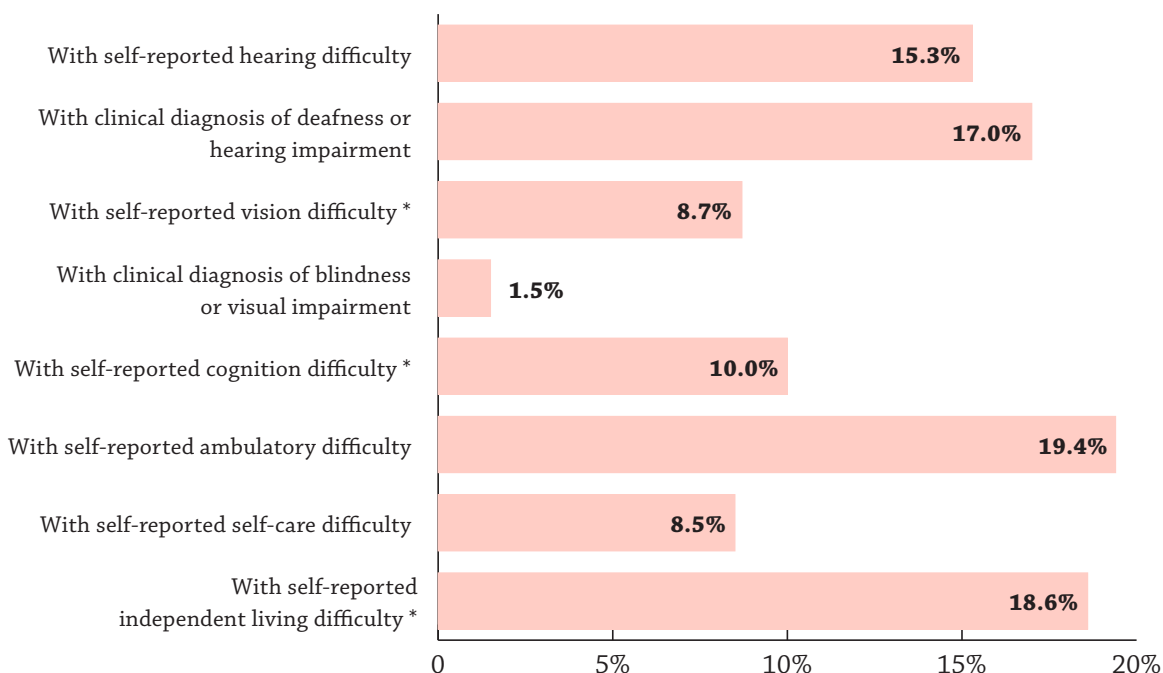


Town, Milton	Percent with a Disability, 2021		
Race	Total Estimated Count	Total Estimated with a Disability	Percent with a disability
White	20,208	1,484	7.3%
Black or African American	4,744	292	6.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native	60	18	30%
Asian	1,441	140	9.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	24	0	0%
Some other race	200	0	0%
Two or more races	1,578	10	0.6%

Recognizing that older residents 65+ have, by far, the greatest prevalence of disabilities, the CHA examined in more detail the types of disabilities that older adults experience, from Milton's Healthy Aging Community Profile, Tufts Health Plan Foundation:

### PERCENTAGE OF MILTON SENIORS WITH SPECIFIED DISABILITIES

MA Health Aging Community Profile, 2018



\* indicates higher % than the state

About 19% of Milton older adults (65+) report independent living difficulties due to one or more disabilities, a higher rate than the state average (~14%).

## Infectious/Communicable Diseases

Respiratory (COVID-19 and Influenza), Tick-borne Diseases (Lyme and Anaplasmosis) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (Chlamydia) are the most frequently reportable communicable diseases between 2019-2021. These tend to also be the top three diseases for the state.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the infectious disease data above was collected during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, so when examining past trends, COVID-19 would not have been listed among the top three communicable diseases before that time. It should also be noted that the Milton rate of Chlamydia is much lower than the state and nation, with about 75 cases reported in 2021 (MCHDT).

### COVID-19

As of April 29, 2023, there were 7,233 documented confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Milton. About 74% of respondents to the 2023 Milton Community Health Survey indicated that they had contracted COVID-19 at some point, and that 6.3% of the respondents were still somewhat impacted physically from the disease and 3.7% were still somewhat affected emotionally.

In November 2021, the MDPH conducted a statewide COVID-19 Community Impact Survey. Of those Milton residents who completed the survey, 22% of residents reported they had not received the medical care they needed, 33% reported that they experienced 15 or more poor mental health days in the past month, and 20% worried about paying mortgage, rent or utilities during the height of the pandemic. COVID-19 had a significant impact on many Milton individuals and families, but especially on our oldest residents and residents of color.

As of 2022, 86.4% of Milton adults were fully vaccinated, a higher rate than the state or nation. (MCHDT)

### INFECTIOUS DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

The Milton Health Department conducts case surveillance and contact tracing on many infectious diseases that occur in the residents of the Town of Milton. There are 96 communicable and other infectious diseases reportable in Massachusetts to Local Boards of Health. MDPH handles certain cases and determines which cases are sent to the local health department for follow-up. The diseases managed by the Town of Milton are primarily respiratory, gastrointestinal, and tickborne diseases. The Health Department is responsible for contacting the ordering physician or primary care physician, infection control and prevention, and the affected resident to gather relevant facts that will assist MDPH in identifying the source of the infection and prevent transmissibility to others.

The surveillance and management of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are handled by the MDPH Division of Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Prevention at the State. The MDPH Division of Global Populations and Infectious Disease Tuberculosis (TB) program also works closely with the local health department to support the needs of those infected with TB and offers educational information to decrease the incidence of TB in the community. The Milton Health Department follows active TB cases in the community, including providing direct observation therapy of medications and case management. Currently there are less than 5 active TB cases and 67 latent TB cases.

The MDPH requires communicable diseases to be reported into the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN). The Milton Health Department conducted thorough case

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7 MDPH Communicable Disease Surveillance System, 2019, 2020, 2021

surveillance and contact tracing for 35 confirmed, and 26 probable communicable disease cases for 2023. In addition there were 420 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 79 confirmed Influenza cases. A complete listing of the confirmed, probable and suspect cases according to case definitions from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health are on file.

## Chronic Diseases and Other Complex Health Conditions

Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last one year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both. Chronic diseases contribute up to 56% of mortality in Massachusetts<sup>9</sup> and are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States.<sup>10</sup> They are also a leading driver of the nation's exorbitant healthcare costs.

Most chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory disease are preventable by eating well, being physically active, avoiding tobacco and excessive drinking, and getting regular health screenings. These personal behaviors are often influenced by the socio-economic circumstances and the community environments in which people live.<sup>11</sup>

Over 1 in 4 adults (BRFSS, 2021) and 1 in 5 children (MDPH, 2022) in Milton are obese. Both rates are lower than the state rate, however. Obesity is a common and complex condition that has a variety of contributing factors that include genetics, socio-economic and physical environments, prenatal and early life influences, and personal behaviors such as poor diet, sleep and physical inactivity. Adults and children who are obese are more likely to develop serious health conditions, such as hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke, sleep apnea and breathing problems, some cancers and mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.<sup>12</sup>

The following data provides a picture of which chronic conditions most impact Milton residents, by age groupings.

### CHRONIC AND COMPLEX CONDITIONS: ALL AGES

Across the lifespan, chronic diseases represent the most prevalent cause of all BID Milton hospital discharges for Milton residents (10/1/21-9/30/22)

Most Prevalent Hospital Discharges by Age			
Children (0-17)	Adults (18-44)	Adults (45-64)	Older Adults (65+)
Asthma	Hypertension	Hypertension	Heart Disease
Diabetes	Obesity	Heart Disease	Hypertension
Obesity	Heart Disease	Diabetes	Congestive Heart Failure

<sup>9</sup> Population Health Information Tool, [www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

<sup>10</sup> [www.CDC.gov/chronicdisease](http://www.CDC.gov/chronicdisease)

<sup>11</sup> [www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease](http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/effects/index.html>

### CHRONIC CONDITIONS: YOUTH

Milton Public School nurses were informally surveyed, in the Fall of 2022, about the most common student illnesses. Asthma was by far the most chronic condition cited, followed by food allergies, obesity, and diabetes. According to the MDPH, in the school year 2016-2017, 11.6% of Milton students in public, private and charter schools were diagnosed with asthma; slightly lower than the state rate of 12.1%. Childhood asthma rates in Milton have held fairly constant over the previous four years.

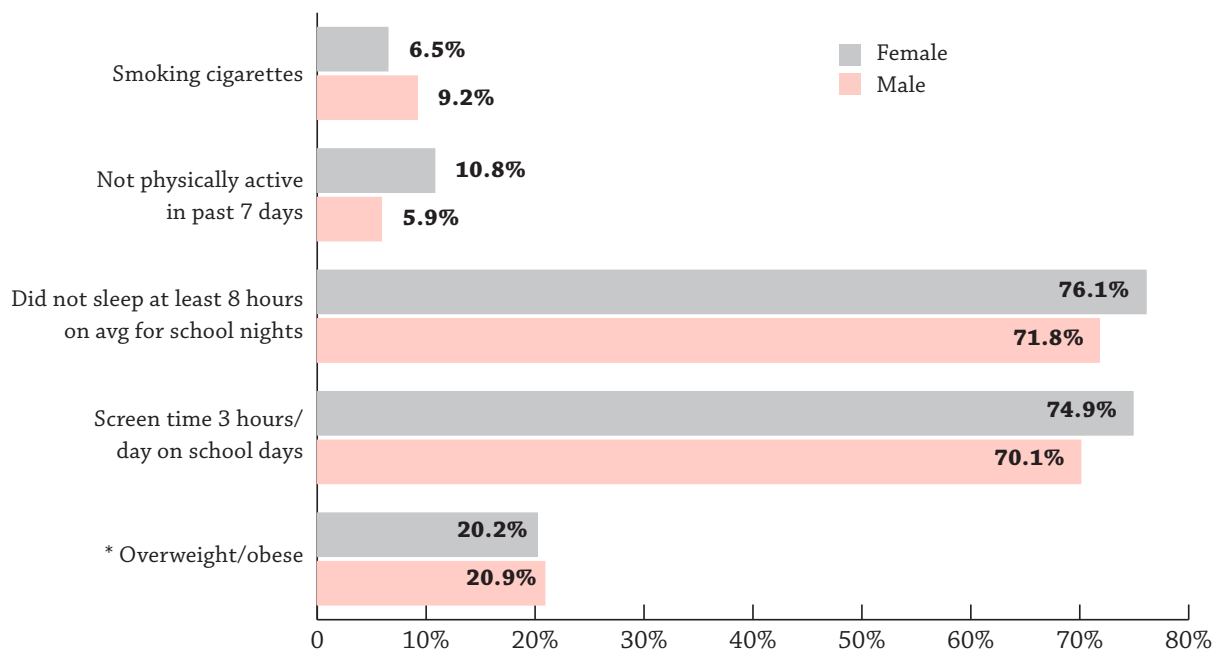
Asthma is a serious chronic disease that affects the airways. It can cause wheezing, difficulty breathing and coughing. While there is an inherited component, exposure to unhealthy air and illnesses can exacerbate the disease. Childhood asthma has negative educational and economic impacts. Children with asthma miss an additional 2.3 days of school per year on average compared with their peers without asthma.<sup>13</sup>

### Youth Risk Factors

Data from the 2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) revealed self-reported health risk behaviors that can lead to chronic diseases later in life. The following data depict Milton high-school behavioral risk factors by sex.

### PERCENTAGE OF MILTON PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT REPORT SPECIFIED RISK FACTOR BY SEX

Youth Risk Behavioral System Survey, 2022

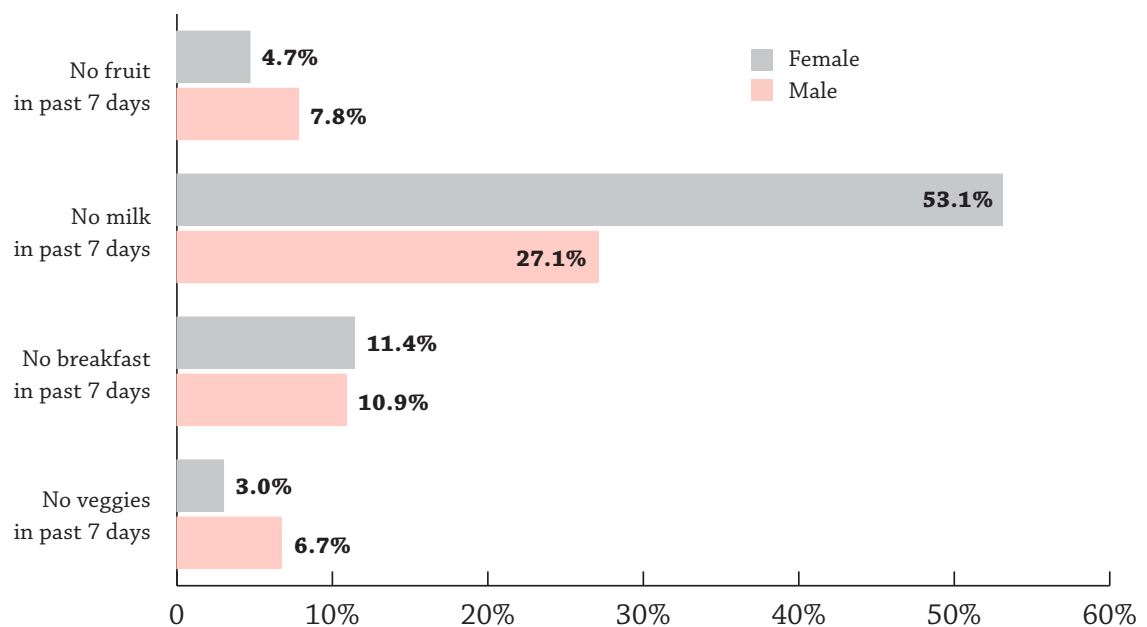


\*Overweight or Obese Children screened in Grades 1, 4, 7, 10 in Massachusetts School Districts, 2016-2017, mass.gov accessed 11/21/2022. (Not YRBS)

The data, reveal that lack of sleep, too much screen time, and overweight/obesity are notable health issues for teens. School personnel and students alike indicate easy access to unhealthy foods as being a contributing factor. When examining nutritional behaviors, over 1 in 10 high school students had not eaten breakfast in the past week, and a very high percentage of teens, predominantly girls, did not consume milk in the past week. Dairy is an important source of calcium, and calcium intake is important in the teen years to help avoid osteoporosis as they grow older.

## PERCENTAGE OF MILTON PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT REPORT SPECIFIED NUTRITIONAL RISK FACTOR

Youth Risk Behavioral System Survey, 2022



### CHRONIC CONDITIONS: ADULTS

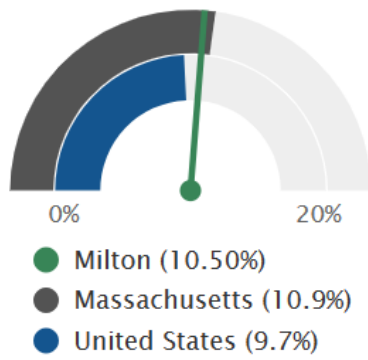
Based on the MCHDT 2021 data Milton adult residents most commonly reported the following rates of chronic or complex conditions. These conditions are also key risk factors for disability and premature death:



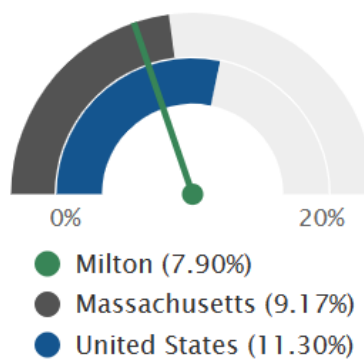
## PERCENTAGE OF MILTON ADULTS WITH SELECT CHRONIC CONDITIONS, (2021)

MA Community Health Data Tool

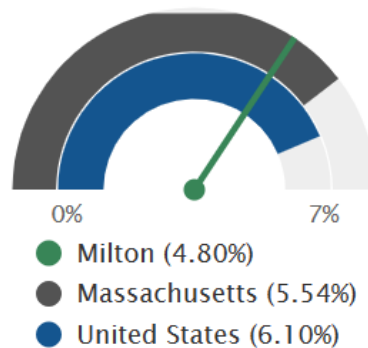
Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
with Current Asthma



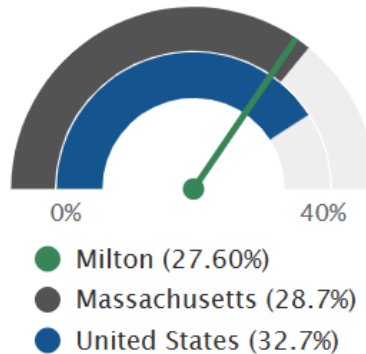
Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
Ever Diagnosed with Diabetes



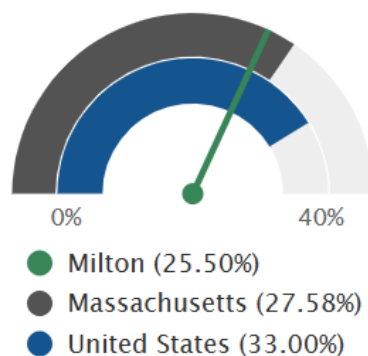
Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
Ever Diagnosed with Coronary  
Heart Disease



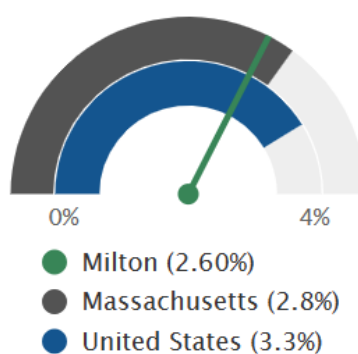
Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
with High Blood Pressure



Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
with Obese (BMI  $\geq 30.0$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>)



Percentage of Adults Age 18+  
Ever Having a Stroke



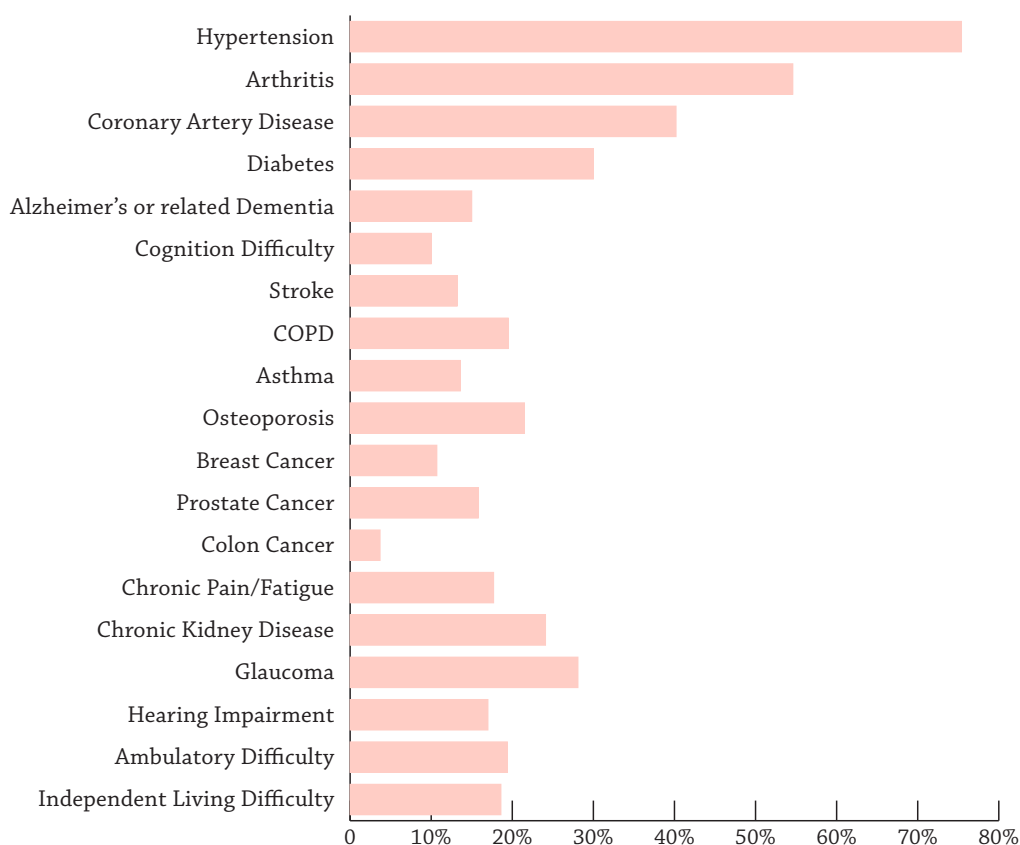
In 2021, more recent BRFSS data from the MCHDT portal reveals that some of these conditions are on the increase since the 2017-2018 data examined. This is an unfavorable trend as these preventable, but manageable, conditions can lead to heart disease, stroke and disabilities.

#### CHRONIC CONDITIONS: OLDER ADULTS

Nearly 60% of older residents are impacted by four or more chronic conditions. The most common conditions are listed in the graphic below. Community members raised that older adults are not receiving adequate follow-up or supportive care-especially those living alone. Many raised the burden of having a family member with dementia, which is higher in Milton than the state average. Community members often highlighted the importance of educating the community on how to effectively serve individuals with dementia and ways to assist their family members. Transportation to medical appointments was mentioned as an important need.

### ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF MILTON OLDER ADULTS WITH SELECT CHRONIC DISEASES

MA Health Aging Community Profile, 2018. 2018 most recent data

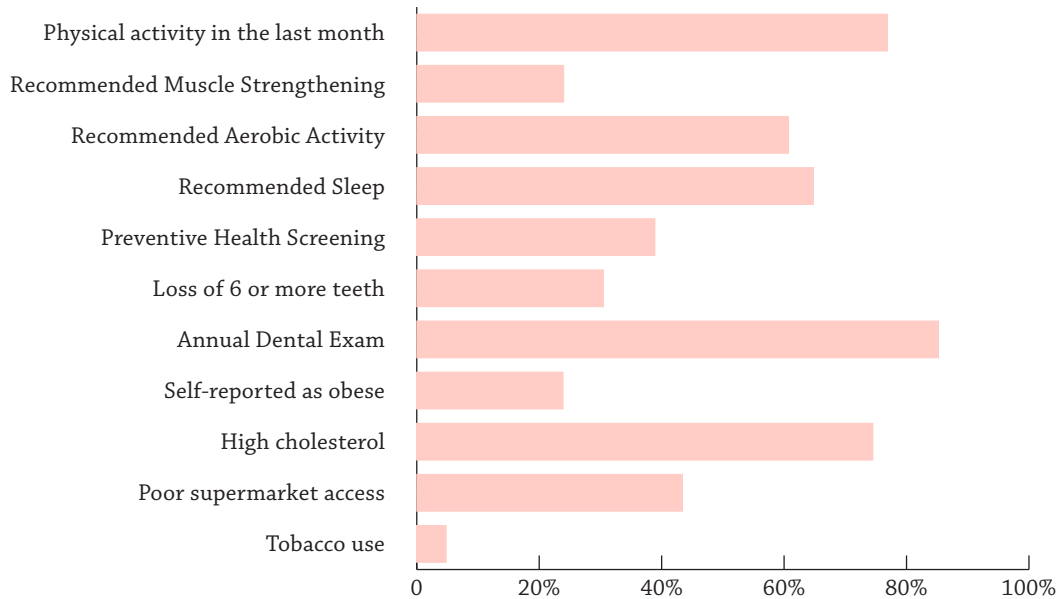


## Risk Factors in Older Adults

The following graph helps to understand the areas where more attention could be paid to support healthier aging in Milton. Strength training, preventive health exams, cholesterol management and supermarket access stand out as potential areas for improvement.

## BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTORS, MILTON OLDER ADULTS

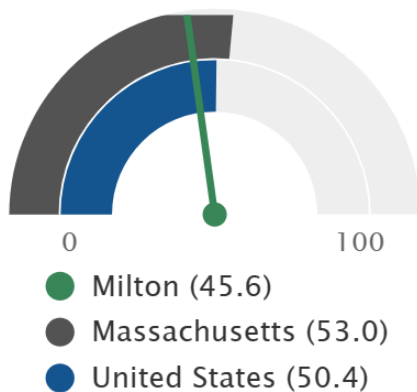
MA Health Aging Community Profile, 2018



## Injuries

Unintentional injuries (not homicide or suicide) are a leading cause of death in the United States. There were 71 unintentional injury deaths in Milton between 2016-2020 (MCHDT). That said, Milton's rates are lower than the state or nation.

### Unintentional Injury Death, Age-Adjusted Death Rate (Per 100,000 Pop.)



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool (2016-2020)

Transformative Healthcare, the 911 ambulance service predominantly used in Milton, provided Milton Health Department with valuable emergency response data for the year 2021, by age group.

Overall, aside from minor illnesses, motor vehicle accidents (#493) and falls (#321) were the top two reasons for emergency ambulance services in Milton in 2021. Both injury types are preventable in some cases. Motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) were the top cause of injuries for adults (ages 19-64). MVAs were the seventh leading cause of 911 calls for older adults.

Traffic safety emerged as a pressing concern for unintentional injuries throughout community conversations. Key informants emphasized the need for comprehensive efforts to enhance road safety, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and MVA prevention. Stakeholders from the schools, First Responders, parents of children living in Milton, the Disability Commission, and the Council on Aging all identified this as a top priority.

Fall injuries were the number one reason for emergency calls for youth (ages 0-18). Milton Public School Nurse staff report that falls at all grade levels, and concussion injuries at the high school level, are health issues of note for Milton Public School students.

## MILTON AMBULANCE RESPONSES, BY AGE GROUP

(Transformative Healthcare, 2021)

2021 Milton EMS Overall			2021 Milton EMS Ages 0-18		2021 Milton EMS Ages 19-64		2021 Milton EMS Ages 65+	
Rank	Medical Issue	Total	Rank	Medical Issue	Rank	Medical Issue	Rank	Medical Issue
1	Minor Illness	1442	1	Fall	1	Minor Illness	1	Fall
2	Motor Vehicle Accident	493	2	Minor Injury	2	Motor Vehicle Accident	2	Stroke
3	Fall	321	3	Minor Illness	3	Seizure	3	Minor Illness
4	Trouble Breathing	92	4	Abdominal Pain	4	Trouble Breathing	4	Cardiac Disorder
5	Serious Medical	99	5	Seizure	5	Serious Medical	5	Trouble Breathing
6	Psychiatric Emergency	75	6	Syncope	6	Psychiatric Emergency	6	Syncope
7	Cardiac Disorder	71	7	Motor Vehicle Accident	7	Cardiac Disorder	7	Motor Vehicle Accident
8	Seizure	62	8	Trouble Breathing	8	Overdose	8	Psychiatric Emergency
9	Cardiac Arrest	39	9	Psychiatric Emergency	9	Stroke	9	Serious Medical
10	Stroke	31	10	Overdose	10	Syncope	10	Overdose

Falls were also the top reason for emergency calls for older adults (ages 65+).

On a side note the MA Healthy Aging Profile report points out that hip fractures were experienced by 4% of older residents in 2018 which is higher than the state rate. First Responders emphasized that older adult falls are a significant problem, and observed that their homes are often not set up properly. Falls can have serious disabling consequences for both young and older age groups.

## Motor Vehicle Accidents

According to the MA Department of Transportation's (DOT) website, there were a total of 3,357 MVAs in Milton between the years 2017-2021. Crashes during this period were mostly motor vehicles in traffic, during the daytime, and under dry road surface conditions. MVAs occurred most often in intersections, followed by lane departures, and distracted driving (#300). Another notable source of MVAs was damage incurred to utility and light poles.

The MassDOT Top Crash Locations Report identifies the intersection of Route 28 at Chickatawbut Road as a Top 5 High Crash Location in Massachusetts. The intersection is currently signalized. Most of these crashes involved vehicles turning left-turning from Route 28 onto Chickatawbut Road crashing into Route 28 through traffic. The intersection is characterized by high vehicle speeds, congestion, and a lack of safe pedestrian and cyclist access.

About 70% of the accidents involved adults (not categorized as “young” or “older” drivers). There were 69 cases of MVAs involving pedestrians or bicyclists, representing less than 2% of accidents. Nearly 2/3 of accidents during this period resulted in no injuries and about 1/3 resulted in minor or possible injuries.

There were 102 alcohol or drug suspected incidents. In their focus group, First Responders indicated concerns about “drugged driving”, especially regarding the effects of prescription drugs and marijuana, which is difficult to enforce. In addition, the YRBS indicated that 23% of high school students texted while driving, although they had relatively low rates of recently driving while intoxicated (3%).

### Milton Motor Vehicle Collision types, (DOT, 2017-2021)

METRIC	# (%)
<b>Types of Crashes</b>	
Fatal Injury Crashes	9 (0.3)
Serious Injury Crashes	44 (1.3)
Minor Injury Crashes	586 (17.5)
Possible Injury Crashes	442 (13.2)
No Injury Crashes	2,187 (65.1)
Other Crashes	89 (2.7)
Total Number of Crashes	3,357
<b>Selected Crash Types</b>	<b># (%)</b>
Pedestrian Related	28 (0.8)
Bicyclist Related	31 (0.9)
Motorcycle Related	52 (1.5)
Young Driver Related	458 (13.6)
Older Driver Related	521 (15.5)

# Behavioral Health

Based on the quantitative, qualitative and survey data collected for this CHA, both mental health and substance use are two issues that figure prominently, across the age spectrum, as the most significant challenges to Milton residents' and employees' well-being. COVID-19 exacerbated these already existing problems, and a perceived shortage of nearby treatment providers and adjustment counselors in the schools make addressing these problems particularly problematic. The issues affect young and old, and in between.

## Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)

### OVERVIEW

The Milton Community Health Survey indicated that alcohol and drug misuse are perceived as the top health challenges for the Milton Community as a whole. Focus groups also listed substance use as among the community's biggest challenges. Survey results indicated that White residents were more concerned about alcohol use, while Black and Caribbean residents were more concerned about drug use.

Alcohol was identified in surveys and interviews as the most prevalent substance used by youth, adults and older adults in Milton. Locating treatment services can be challenging, due to the complexity of navigating the systems, staff shortages, and the stigma/denial involved, according to community residents.

Statistical reports confirm perceptions that of all the substances, alcohol disorders appear to affect Milton residents of all ages by far the most frequently. The 2022 YRBS results certainly indicated an ongoing problem of regular and binge drinking among teens; and the BRFSS in 2021 indicates that nearly 18% of adults in Milton had four or more drinks at a time in the last month. Moreover, the Milton Community Survey indicated that for those households with a reported substance use problem, 100% of them were related to alcohol and in some cases, also marijuana. Furthermore, the MA Aging Profile Report indicated that Milton older adults drink excessively at higher rates than their state cohorts (13.7% vs 9.3%). State-sponsored rehabilitation facilities also indicate that alcohol disorders are the most frequent diagnosis.

The opioid epidemic has impacted many families around the country, including within Milton. The most recent data available between 2016-2020 indicates that there were 36 drug overdose deaths between 2016-2020, and the Milton rate was higher than the nation as a whole. (MCHDT)

Another aspect of substance use is the perception that certain racial groups are using substances more frequently, although data indicates that the problem is experienced by residents of all backgrounds.



## Substance misuse contributes to many of society's health challenges<sup>14</sup>

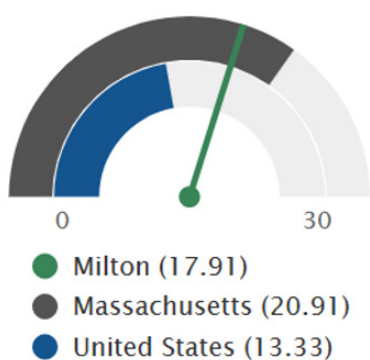
Short term risks include:

- Unintentional injuries such as falls, drownings, burns, and motor vehicle accidents.
- Violence such as homicide, suicide, and sexual assault.
- Alcohol poisoning.
- Poor decision-making and engagement in risky behaviors like unprotected sex.

Long-term risks include:

- Hypertension, heart disease, stroke, and liver disease.
- Cancer of the breasts, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, or colon.
- Alcohol dependence.
- Memory and learning problems.

Liquor Stores, Rate per 100,000  
Population



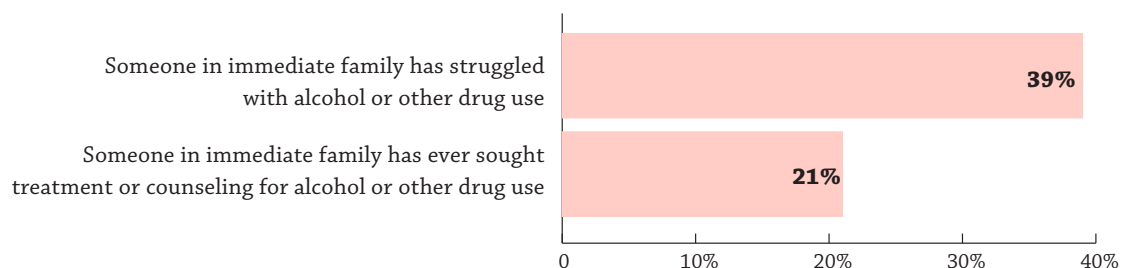
Milton has less retail stores that sell alcohol or tobacco, per population in 2021, than the state but more than the nation according to the MCHDT.

### HOUSEHOLD PREVALENCE AND IMPACT

The Milton Coalition's Online Parent Survey indicated that over 1 in 5 families have sought treatment for an alcohol or drug disorder; and the YRBS Survey indicated that 19% of Milton High School students live with someone with a drug or alcohol problem. This can be an important source of household discord, mental illness, and childhood trauma if left unaddressed.

## IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE USE ON MILTON FAMILIES

The Milton Coalition Online Parent Survey, 2022



<sup>14</sup> United Health Foundation, America's Health Rankings, [www.america'shealthrankings.org](http://www.america'shealthrankings.org)

## YOUTH PREVALENCE

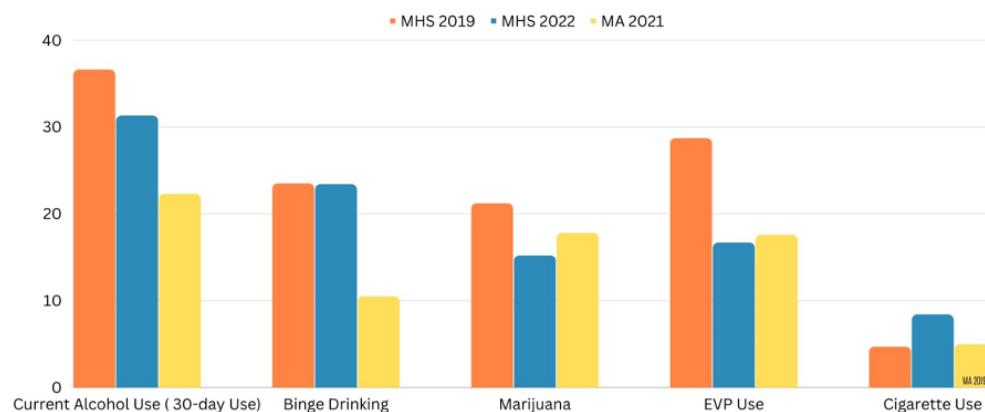
While rates of using alcohol, marijuana, electronic vaping products (EVP) and unauthorized use of prescription drugs have declined since 2019 at Milton High School, the rates are still concerning to community members. Binge drinking has remained high and cigarette use has increased at the high school, while use of marijuana at Pierce Middle School has increased and is now at higher levels than the state.

Law enforcement point to vaping of tobacco and THC as significant youth drug issues. They also note that benzodiazepines (“benzos”), used mostly by adults to treat anxiety, are getting in the hands of youth. First Responders also note how disrespectful intoxicated youth have become.

Youth focus group participants pointed out the normalization of alcohol use in town, as did members of a clergy focus group. In their discussions, youth participants shared their experiences of feeling compelled to partake in such activities, often viewing them as a rite of passage. Both youth and clergy addressed how sports team social dynamics may contribute to youth alcohol use. Youth emphasized the importance of helping kids cultivate healthy coping mechanisms and that it is necessary to initiate conversations about substance use early on in spaces outside of just health classes, such as at home, in community venues, and at sports activities.

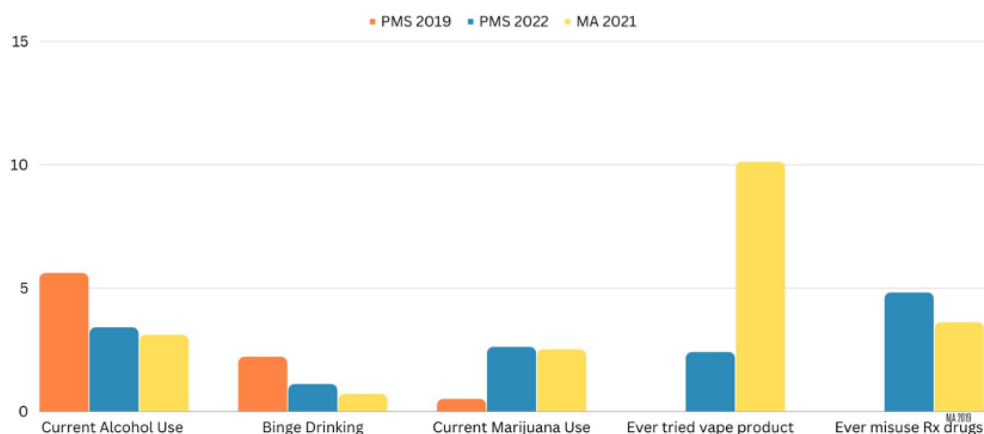
The graphics below were created by The Milton Coalition for their 2023 community assessment, and depict student substance use rates in both the high school and middle school. They compare rates between 2019 and 2022. The graphs include statewide high school and middle school rates in 2021 for comparison. While impressive improvements have been made over time, alcohol and drug use among youth require vigilant efforts.

### CURRENT YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE (PAST MONTH): HIGH SCHOOL



Source: The Milton Coalition, 2022

## CURRENT YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE (PAST MONTH): MIDDLE SCHOOL



Source: The Milton Coalition, 2022

While genetics play an important role in the development of substance use disorders (SUDs), there are important risk factors and protective practices that can be adopted in homes, in schools and in communities which can reduce the eventual development of SUDs. Most important among them are preventing youth drug and alcohol use while their brains are susceptible, and reducing the stigma that prevents them from getting the help they need.

### ADULT PREVALENCE

Milton adults, as compared to other age groups, appear to have the greatest prevalence of SUDs, based on the Milton Community Health Survey and state inpatient data.

### MILTON COMMUNITY HEALTH SURVEY RESULTS (2023)

**\*5%** of respondents indicated that someone in their household was currently dependent on substances.

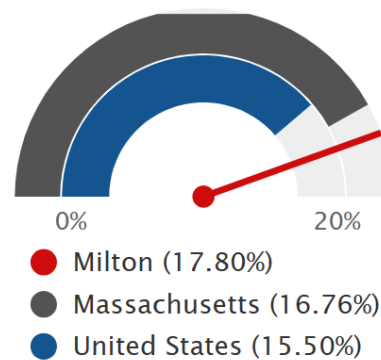
*Of these who were considered dependent:*

- **95%** were adults in the household; **5%** were children under 18 years old
- **100%** were dependent on alcohol and of these, **16%** were also dependent on marijuana
- There were no reports of other drug dependency

In addition MCHDT data indicate that Milton Adults engage in binge drinking at higher rates than the state or nation.

The most recent data available on Milton resident admissions to state SUD facilities was from fiscal year 2017 (pre-COVID-19), indicating 119 total admissions.<sup>15</sup> The admissions were almost entirely adults. The most common substance diagnosis was for alcohol (56%), followed by heroin and other opioid addictions (40%). Milton First Responders confirm that they also attend to opioid and fentanyl overdoses. While there were no admissions for a marijuana disorder in 2017, in 2016 nearly 13% of admissions were for marijuana disorders.

Percentage of Adults Age 18+ Binge Drinking in the Past 30 Days



Source: MA Community Health Data Tool, 2021

## APPROXIMATE DEMOGRAPHICS OF MILTON RESIDENTS WHO WERE ADMITTED IN FY 2017

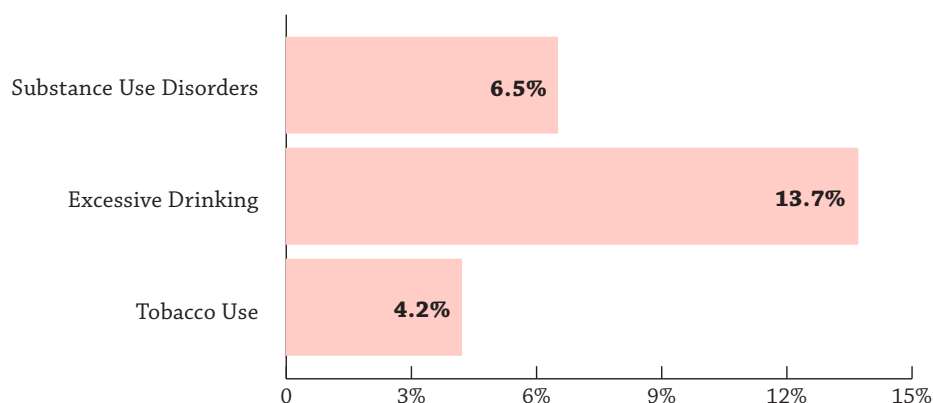
- **Race/Ethnicity:** 80% white, 10% Black, 7% other; 0% Hispanic
- **Gender:** 41% Women; 59% Men
- **Age:** 0% under age 18; 24% age 18-25; 45% age 26-40; 15% age 41-50; 16% age 51 or older

### OLDER ADULTS (60+) PREVALENCE

According to prevalence estimates in the Healthy Aging Community Profile, Milton older residents smoke at about half the rate as their statewide peers, but excessive drinking is estimated to be about 50% higher than the state average. First Responders state that misuse of prescription drugs and accidental overdoses is an issue they find themselves addressing with older residents.

## ESTIMATED PERCENTAGE OF SUBSTANCE AND TOBACCO USE, MILTON OLDER ADULTS

MA Healthy Aging Community Profile, 2018



15 MDPH Bureau of Substance Use Services, Geographic Fact Sheets, as of July 6, 2018

According to the National Center for Equitable Care for Elders at Harvard University (March 2020), the number of older adults in the U.S. needing treatment for substance use has tripled from between the years 2000 and 2020, and alcohol is the most common substance used. Further, they note that SUDs are often not identified in older adults, nor are they effectively treated.

## Mental Health

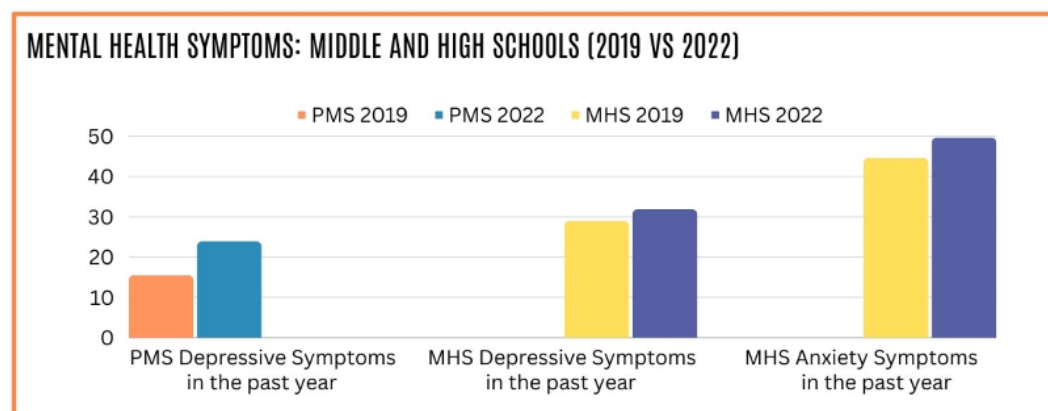
### OVERVIEW

Depression, chronic anxiety, and stress widely impact the health and well-being of children, teens, adults and older adults in Milton. These conditions were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants who served as key informants for various age groups consistently mentioned the lack of access to mental health services as a significant concern. However, the Milton Community Health Social Worker notes that, more recently, there is an ongoing shift towards greater availability of treatment services and support.

### YOUTH

Prevalence rates of mental illness in teens have been increasing, based on hospital and youth survey data. Between 2017-2019, inpatient hospital discharges for Milton youth under 18 years of age for mental health conditions increased by 18% at BID Milton. Moreover, based on the 2022 YRBS survey, depressive symptoms increased in both Pierce Middle School and Milton High School students between 2019 and 2022, as did persistent anxiety symptoms among MHS students. Additionally, 15% of high school students and 22% of middle school students reported that they had engaged in self-harm in the past year, a strong indicator of emotional distress. Milton Public School Nurses and Adjustment Counselors echoed that mental health issues for students are significant.

YRBS 2022 data highlight that non-white and LGBTQIA+ students are experiencing higher rates of mental health challenges (e.g., suicidal ideation/attempts) than their white and heterosexual peers.



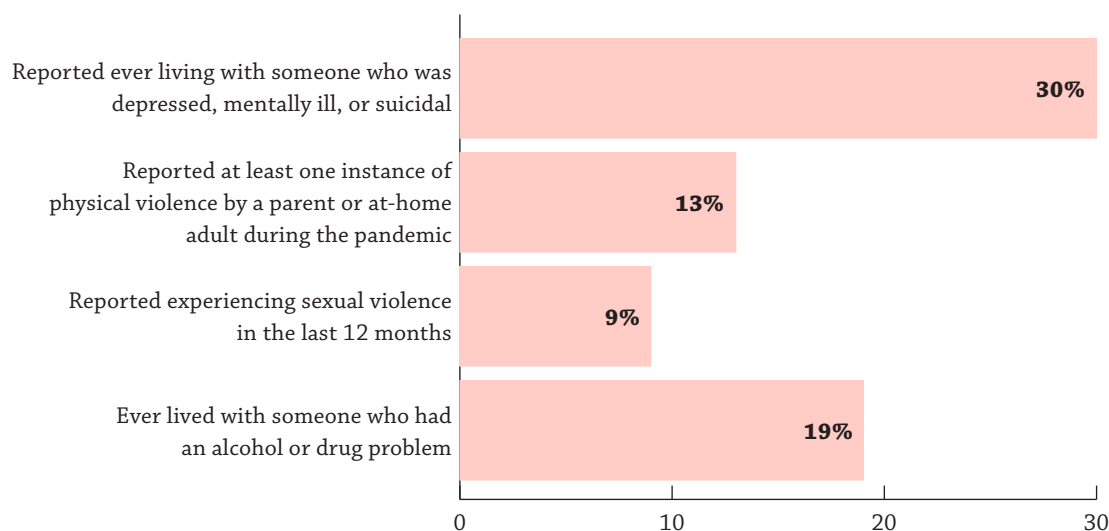
Graphic created by The Milton Coalition, 2023

Valuable input was collected from both adults and youth, through community interviews, about why youth mental health problems are so prevalent and what can be done about them. All age groups focused on depression, anxiety and stress as the primary emotional challenges, and that the pandemic exacerbated them. A lack of “life balance” caused by high expectations of academic, social and sports achievement, as well as too much exposure to social media, were cited as frequent causes. The social isolation that was caused by COVID-19 and “Fear of Missing Out” (FOMO) have contributed to the social anxiety experienced by both children and their parents. Bullying was also a point of concern, especially for youth of color. Numerous discussions also alluded to the uncertain state of the world, including climate change, as factors that negatively impact youth emotional wellbeing.

Childhood trauma, or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) is documented in the literature as an important risk factor in the development of both higher rates of physical and mental health problems, as well as SUDs. Traumatic events can include physical or emotional abuse; chronic physical, mental or SUD challenges in the immediate family; and economic instability. The YRBS high school data revealed the following traumatic experiences experienced by many high school-aged youth (at home and in the community)

## MILTON PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS - CHILDHOOD TRAUMA EXPOSURE

Youth Risk Behavioral System Survey, 2022



In a school staff focus group, the mental health of students emerged as a pressing concern as well. They expressed their worries about the lack of adequate mental health supports for students.

Youth focus group participants candidly expressed their struggles and shared that they were encouraged to “*tough it out*” in the face of adversity, without receiving the support needed to process their traumatic experiences. This lack of emotional guidance left them feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope. They highlighted the need for a more compassionate and supportive approach to addressing childhood trauma, such as family divorce or household substance use, with more resources and guidance to navigate challenging experiences. Providing early interventions and peer support groups were suggested as important coping strategies.



## Concerns of Parents and Public School Staff

The Milton Coalition's online Parent Survey in 2022 focused on the behavioral health of youth from the parents' perspective. The results of the survey are as follows:

### RESULTS: THE MILTON COALITION PARENT SURVEY, 2022

The top 5 concerns of all parent participants, concerning their children's health and wellbeing were, in order of concern:

- Mental Health (anxiety, stress and depression)
- Screen Time
- Bullying
- Concussions
- School Safety

The top 5 concerns of parents of color, in particular, concerning their children's health and wellbeing were, in order of concern:

- Bullying
- Mental Health (anxiety and stress)
- Discrimination
- Screen Time
- Concussions

### MILTON ADULTS AND HOUSEHOLDS

The Milton Community Health Survey inquired about the mental health status of both the respondents themselves and their family members. The results indicated that 17.6% of the adult respondents personally experienced poor mental health in the past year, and 22.7% of respondents had someone else in their household experience mental health challenges. Of these other household members with a mental health challenge, nearly half were the spouse and half were the children of the respondent.

Additionally, the MCHDT portal indicates that in 2021, nearly 20% of Milton adults had been told by a health care professional that they suffered with a depressive disorder, which is a similar rate to the state and nation. Moreover, 13% of adult Milton residents reported 14 or more days during the past month when their mental health was not good.

### OLDER ADULTS (AGE 65+)

The Healthy Aging Profile estimates that 29.1% of Milton older adults experienced depression and 22.5% experienced anxiety disorders in 2018.

Community members expressed their concerns about how social isolation takes a toll on the mental well-being of older residents. The sprawling nature of the community, characterized by dispersed neighborhoods and lack of consistent transportation, are partially to blame. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these circumstances. In addition, First Responders noted the lack of psychiatric beds, or inpatient mental health services for older adults.

## TOWN OF MILTON WORKFORCE

Town employees, and their eligible family members, receive health insurance from the Town of Milton. Depression, anxiety, and phobias were the leading health challenges requiring reimbursable treatment by Blue Cross Blue Shield as of August 2022.

Employees' well-being is integral to the overall health of our community. Insights gathered from focus group participants highlighted several key factors that contribute to workplace health and safety:

**Challenges in Interactions with the Public:** Participants noted instances of disrespectful behavior from the public, exacerbated by the lack of sufficient staff to manage and address such situations. These interactions can take a toll on well-being and overall job satisfaction.

**Ergonomics and Workplace Conditions:** The challenges posed by aging buildings and lack of ergonomic measures contribute to discomfort and potential health issues among the workforce.

**Workplace Safety and Training:** Focus group discussions highlighted the necessity for comprehensive and updated training in workplace safety protocols. Participants expressed the need for clear guidance on how to respond to emergencies and ensure the safety of both staff and the community.

Cultivating a workforce that mirrors the community can promote inclusivity and cultural competence in service delivery, thereby positively impacting the overall health outcomes and experiences of residents.

**Job Burnout and Morale:** Work burnout and low morale were identified as significant issues impacting workforce wellness. Lack of appreciation from management and inadequate pay scales were cited as contributors to this problem. Suggestions to counteract these challenges included providing flexible assignments, offering competitive compensation, and establishing programs for professional development and morale-building.

## Social Determinants of Health



Healthy People 2030, CDC

The socio-economic and physical environments in which people grow, live, work and play are referred to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), and these factors have even more impacts on overall health status than the medical care received (National Academy of Sciences). Housing Quality and Affordability, Educational and Health Care Quality and Access; Economic Stability; Access to Healthy Foods, Recreation and Transportation; and the Natural and Social Environments in the community- including feelings of safety, belonging, and discrimination, are all key factors that significantly influence the length and quality of our lives and can help explain why there are health disparities.

This section examines the SDOH factors as they pertain to Milton and will also explain why each is important to the health of the community. Much of this explanation is directly quoted from America's Health Rankings, an annual report produced by United Health Foundation. <https://www.americashealthrankings.org> accessed 4/11/2023, and the federal government's Healthy People 2030, [www.health.gov](http://www.health.gov) website.



## Educational Attainment

In Milton, both educational attainment and satisfaction is high. In the BID Milton survey, 97% of Milton respondents agreed with the following statement, *"People like me have access to good education for their children."*

Educational attainment is a strong predictor of future health outcomes. The connection between education and health is well documented. Lower educational attainment among adults is correlated with poorer health. Higher educational attainment is associated with better jobs, higher earnings, and better self-reported health and fewer chronic conditions. Individuals with lower educational attainment are at greater risk of adverse health outcomes such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, lung disease, mental health problems and premature death. .

*Education, 25 yrs and older (ACS 2022)*

- 96% of Milton residents 25 years of age and older had a high school degree or higher.
- 68% of Milton residents 25 years of age and older had a bachelor's degree or higher.

A significantly higher rate of Milton adult residents hold bachelor's or higher academic degrees compared with state rates.

*DESE, School and District Report Cards (2020)*

- 95% of all students in the Milton Public School district graduate high school vs. 89% statewide.
- 84% of economically disadvantaged Milton students graduate from high school within four to five years vs. 81% statewide. (14.5% of Milton public school students are considered low income)
- 84% of Milton students attended post-secondary education vs. 64% statewide.

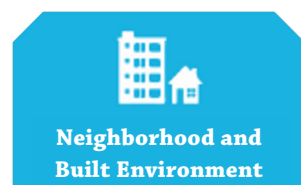
## Early Childhood Education

For many, the path to higher educational attainment starts with early childhood education. There is strong evidence that early childhood education leads not only to higher educational attainment but also contributes to better health and promotes health equity. Children who attend early childhood education typically have reduced special education use, teen births and crime, improved standardized test scores and increased high school graduation. However, in Milton, affordable childcare is a challenge. In the BID Milton survey, less than half of respondents (49%) agreed with the following statement, “*People like me have access to affordable childcare services.*”

In partnership with the Milton Early Childhood Alliance (MECA), Early Childhood Associates conducted a Needs Assessment of the early education and care system serving Milton families with children between the ages of birth to five years. The results reaffirmed the BID Milton survey findings.

### SUMMARY OF 2022 MECA ASSESSMENT FINDINGS: OVERALL NEEDS/CHALLENGES

- More affordable early education and care options are needed. Cost of care is a prominent barrier faced by families with young children, especially those with multiple children in the home. Few programs offer financial assistance and that’s further limited by strict eligibility criteria.
- Capacity needs to be expanded, as waitlists are very long.
- There is a lack of flexible hours offered. Programs should consider more opportunities for early drop-off and late pick-up for full-time working families.
- There is a particular lack of information and resources to help parents whose children have disabilities.
- Low income and non-English speaking families are finding it to be the most difficult to access information about care and there is a shortage of staff who can meet the needs across different cultural groups.



## Milton’s Natural Environment

Environmental health and safety is an important predictor of community health. Air pollution is a source of premature morbidity and mortality. Different size pollutant particles in the air can cause irritation and discomfort and have been linked to heart and lung problems. Safe drinking water is important to overall health and may aid in the prevention of certain birth defects, infectious diseases, and premature death. Lead, a naturally occurring heavy metal, is highly toxic, especially to young children and pregnant people.

The US EPA and state health department conducted a statewide survey of radon levels in homes, by county. The results showed that 21% of Norfolk County homes had radon that exceeded EPA safe levels of 4 pCi/L. (Source:MA Environmental Public Health Tracking System)

Investments in environmental safety emerged as a community priority. Participants

highlighted the crucial need to minimize pollution and promote conservation. Furthermore, many interviewees expressed concerns about climate change.

It is important to note that while concerns about the environment are certainly valid, the quantitative data collected suggests that air and water quality in Milton currently meet safety standards, providing a reassuring baseline for residents.

The Town of Milton has a growing commitment to climate resilience and environmental sustainability, and recently established a Climate Action Planning Committee to further address these issues. Key informants emphasized the importance of raising awareness among community members about environmental health, sustainability and educating the community about climate change.

## Air Quality

The American Lung Association's (ALA) "State of the Air Report- 2022" grades counties, across the US, based on two key air pollutant indicators: *ozone* and *small particulates*. There is insufficient county data on PM2.5 (small particulates), but there is sufficient county-level data on ozone levels. Ozone can be a threat to humans at every stage of life, increasing the risk of premature birth, causing or worsening lung or heart diseases, and shortening lives.<sup>16</sup>

Norfolk County received a Grade of "B" (possible scores A-F) from the ALA relative to the average weighted number of high ozone days. However, since 2007, the county's ozone levels have consistently improved and have been at acceptable levels from 2015 through 2021, the most recent data years.



### MILTON-SPECIFIC RESULTS:

The MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) placed an air monitor in Milton at 1904 Canton Avenue, from March 1-September 30, 2020, during the ozone season. There was no detection of unsafe ozone levels during that time, measured in 8 hour daily maximum values that are greater than the .070 ppm 8 hour standard. Similarly, DEP measured nitrogen dioxide levels in Milton during 2020. The arithmetic mean was 3.46 parts per billion, well within safe National Ambient Air Quality Standards.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.lung.org/research/sota/health-risks>

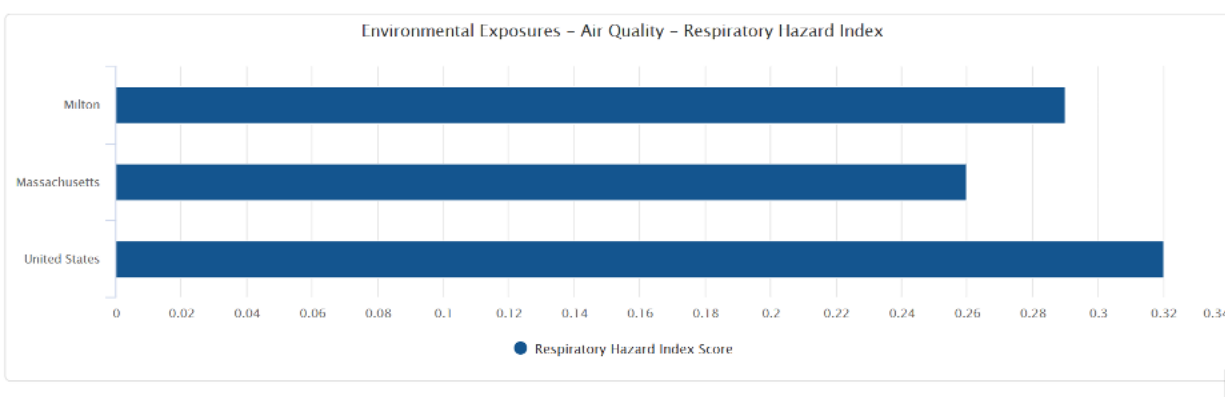
<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2020-annual-air-quality-report/download>

The Milton Department of Public Works (DPW) monitored PM2.5 air particulate levels in 4 areas of town considered to be potentially higher pollutant areas, from February 1, 2022-December 1, 2022. The four Purple Air Monitors were placed outside Milton Town Hall, the DPW Yard, and two houses: one on the east side and one on the west side near the Blue Hills.

## RESULTS

Nearly all PM2.5 Air Quality Index values monitored by DPW in the four areas of Milton were within the appropriate 0-50 range, considered safe by the US EPA.

Finally, the EPA's 2018 Respiratory Hazard Index Score reports on non-cancer respiratory hazards and adverse health effects, where scores less than 1.0 indicate adverse health effects are unlikely, and scores of 1.0 or more indicate a potential for adverse health effects. Milton's score is .29, well within safe limits.



## Water Quality

### DRINKING WATER

The Milton DPW issued a water quality report for the calendar year 2021. They explained that the only public source of water in the town is from the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA). The report says, “The good news is that Milton continues to provide clean, safe quality water for the essential daily needs of our residents and commercial customers in conformity with stringent federal and state regulation...The results of the September 2021 testing for the required Lead and Copper Testing Rule indicated that the Town of Milton, once again achieved its goal of staying under the 15 ppb Action Level for Lead, and under the 1300 ppb Action Level for Copper...The MWRA and Milton also routinely test 8-10 water samples each week for total coliform bacteria to monitor the water quality in the distribution system...Milton had no positive tests for coliform in 2021 and there were no violations of the Total Coliform Rule....”



While Milton’s water supply is safe relative to these measures, the DPW also warns that water contamination can happen at home. Lead and copper pipes within homes, or pipes leading to the main water supply from the home can be contaminated. Fertilizers can also contaminate water supplies. Should a family have young children, it may be wise to have their soil and tap water tested.

There are certain families who receive their water from private wells. It may benefit them to test their water supplies regularly for the presence of contamination. More information can be found on the Mass Department of Environmental Protection website.<sup>18</sup>

#### MWRA MONTHLY QUALITY ANALYSIS JANUARY 2024

The Town of Milton receives its water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). The MWRA tests the water in its system extensively for over 120 different contaminants and parameters across the system; this includes several hundred thousand tests each year.

EPA and MA DEP set the standards for source and treated water quality, and include standards for total and fecal coliform, turbidity, disinfection and disinfection by-products, pathogens, metals, and other potential chemical contaminants.

Tests are conducted on water sampled at the source reservoirs (source or “raw water”) and also on water after treatment (“treated water”). MWRA also routinely monitors for a variety of parameters that tell us about disinfection, corrosivity, and the organic and inorganic constituents in the water.

The Total Coliform Rule (TCR) helps to alert communities to possible microbial contamination as well as the adequacy of residual disinfection within the local distribution system. MWRA tests over 2,000 community samples per month. Below are the results of TCR testing from January 2024 across the service system and in Milton specifically.

Total Coliform				
	# Samples	# (%) Positive	E.Coli Positive	Assessment Required?
<b>Total: MWRA</b>	657	4 (0.58%)	0	No
<b>Milton</b>	34	0 (0%)	0	No

There were 34 samples taken from Milton. Of those samples none were tested positive for total coliform. Moreover, none of the 2,227 fully and partially served samples from the MWRA system tested positive for total coliform during the month of January.

Overall, the MWRA met all regulatory targets for the month. No community triggered the requirement for an Assessment under the Revised Total Coliform Rule.

\*Source: MWRA Water Quality Update: An Analysis of January 2024 Sampling Data - 012024.pdf (mwra.com)

18 <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/private-drinking-water-testing-and-the-use-of-massdep-certified-laboratories>

## WATER WAYS

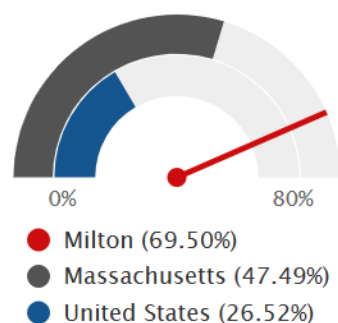
The CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking System in 2022 indicates that large swaths of the Town of Milton are located near Superfund sites (60%), as compared to the state overall (16%). The Lower Neponset River site consists of a 3.7-mile section of the Neponset River between its confluence with Mother Brook (in Hyde Park, MA) and the Walter Baker Dam (in Dorchester/Milton, MA). Based on preliminary studies, this portion of the river contains sediment contaminated with elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a toxic chemical. In March 2022, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed the Lower Neponset River site on the National Priorities List for remediation. The water is considered unhealthy to swim in and the fish are unhealthy to consume. However, it is considered safe to use the Lower Neponset River for activities such as walking, biking, boating, rowing, kayaking, and visiting parks/playgrounds.

Turner's Pond occasionally becomes contaminated with harmful algae blooms, making it unhealthy to eat fish caught in the pond. The recent Cyanobacteria bloom (Spring 2023) may have been caused by warmer temperatures and/or fertilizers seeping into the water.

## LEAD CONTAMINATION

According to the CDC's Environmental Health Tracking System, 2022, Milton residents have a high lead paint exposure risk (39%), higher than the state (21%) or nation (9%). Lead exposure can occur through a variety of places, especially in older homes, some water pipes and in the soil. There is no known safe level of lead exposure. Housing built before 1978 carries an elevated risk for lead exposure, and housing built before 1950 has the highest risk of lead exposure. Due to a ban on lead-based paint in 1978, housing built after this year carries minimal risk. Milton has an older housing stock than the state and nation, with the median year built in 1944. Of the 9,462 units, 6,576 of them were built before 1960, a time when lead paint was predominantly used (MCHDT).

Percentage of Housing Units  
Constructed Before 1960



Source: MA Community Health Data  
Tool, 2021

Childhood blood level results, usually taken at the pediatrician's office, must be reported to the state health department. The percentage of Milton children screened for high blood lead levels declined between 2017-2020. The highest percentage of children screened during that four-year period was 86.5% and the lowest was 79%. While Milton fared better than the state in both screening and lead poisoning metrics, it would benefit more Milton families to ensure that their pediatricians screen their children to detect and prevent potentially harmful developmental impacts from lead exposure inside and outside their home or childcare facility.

## Environmental Justice

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) publishes an *Environmental Justice (EJ) Maps Viewer* that provides information about areas in the Commonwealth that are considered to have EJ Populations based on certain demographic criteria, such as income and race. Approximately 29% of Milton's population (2021) is deemed to live in blocks that are EJ population areas and more likely to be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change.<sup>19</sup>

The Milton neighborhoods where most EJ populations live border the Boston neighborhood of Mattapan. Based on a process called "heat island mapping", a geographic heat index was created in 2019. The heat map demonstrated that this area, where Eliot Street and Brush Hill Road converge with Blue Hill Avenue, is excessively hot and humid, likely because of asphalt and fewer trees. A map of requested shade trees provided free of charge by the Department of Public Works in FY 21 and 22 revealed that relatively fewer requests for shade trees were made in this area of town where they are most needed. However, it has been noted that in the summer of 2023, new tree planting was observed on Blue Hills Parkway.

## Milton's Built Environment

The built environment refers to the physical surroundings in which people live, travel, work and play. According to the BID Milton Survey, most people feel positive about this aspect of Milton life. (A more current survey is being conducted by the town, to be released after this CHA is completed.)

### BID MILTON SURVEY (2022)

- People like me have access to safe, clean parks and open spaces: 96%
- People like me have access to reliable transportation: 84%

## Transportation

Key informants highlighted the need for more intra-town transit as a critical priority, emphasizing its broad-reaching impact on the health and well-being of Milton's residents of all ages. Throughout the interviews, discussions touched on the lack of public transportation infrastructure and its impact on safety, access to essential services, as well as on social cohesion. Moreover, an Age Friendly Milton assessment conducted by UMass Boston Gerontology Institute found that transportation is a critical need for older residents to get essential services.

In Milton, approximately 57% of people drive alone to work, which is lower than the state and national rates, and 5% carpool. Approximately 10% take public transportation and another 4% ride their bicycles or walk to work. Additionally, about 21% of workers work from home and 17% spend more than 60 minutes commuting to work. Finally, about 6% of all households do not own a motor vehicle (ACS, 2018-2022).

Traffic is a major challenge expressed by Milton residents in the Milton Community Survey. The US Environmental Protection Agency's Smart Location Database reveals that Milton has extremely high road density (number of roads/square mile) compared to the state or nation.

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19 <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-2020-environmental-justice-populations>

20 <https://nu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e9613a066f7d4f58ba84113a0d0cf94d>

While access to reliable public transportation is a high priority for residents, who feel that there is not sufficient access, Milton does have more access to public transit than the state or nation.

## Active Living

The need for more opportunities to exercise, both indoors and outdoors, was an expressed need, in addition to accessible spaces.

There are efforts in town, many led by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Planning Board, that are working to improve public health by creating wider and safer opportunities for safer walking and rolling options. For example, in 2018, the Town passed a Complete Streets policy and Prioritization Plan, and both were approved by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). This planning effort identified existing conditions and potential opportunities for all major roads and routes within the Town. They note that currently, on the north side of Milton (near Mattapan), the Neponset trail runs along the Mattapan Trolley line, connecting residents there to Boston's southern neighborhoods of Dorchester and Mattapan, as well as connections to the Red Line. However, outside of the Mattapan Trolley area, there are few walk, bike, and roll connections to transit that exist in Milton.

Additionally, a Master Plan for Milton was created that has incorporated a goal, with specific objectives, of attending to the health and wellness of the Milton population. Their overall recommendations are to:

- Promote wellness through more recreation and physical fitness opportunities.
- Expand community gatherings and social capital to decrease isolation and increase community engagement.

The Master Plan can be found on the Town of Milton website.

To ascertain active living priorities for Milton residents, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Town, created a community survey to understand more about bike, walk, and roll challenges and opportunities in the Town. The results show that:

- Lack of and poorly maintained infrastructure is the top barrier for people to walk, bike, and roll in Milton, followed by driver behavior
- The top identified uses of Milton's current and future trails include (1) walking alone or with others, (2) cycling for recreation or transportation, and (3) exploring nature
- The experience for people with disabilities, older adults, and children is especially challenging
- There are many locations, especially at intersections, where walking, biking, and rolling are not only uncomfortable, but dangerous
- Maintenance of roadways, sidewalks and greenery would ensure better access to existing infrastructure.

In response to their survey, the Town of Milton recently created (June 2022) a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The Plan concentrates on allowing and encouraging more people in Milton to both be able to walk, bike, and roll for everyday and occasional trips. By encouraging and providing opportunities for more sustainable, equitable transportation options, the Town can work towards larger goals of decreasing traffic, decreasing emissions,

and increasing public health for residents and visitors. This is important because there is great overall concern about the amount of motor vehicle traffic (especially large trucks) that travels through Milton, as well as the number of aggressive drivers.

The goals of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan are to:

1. Develop a culture where residents and employees choose to walk, bike, and roll to schools, retail areas, places of employment, and other points of interest and can do so safely and conveniently.
2. Develop a bicycle and pedestrian network plan connecting these Town-wide destinations and surrounding communities through safe, comfortable, and convenient routes.
3. Begin to institutionalize the implementation of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations at the local level as part of all roadway projects.
4. Reinforce the culture of walking and bicycling with initiatives to support infrastructure improvements.
5. Address and prioritize improvements in areas where people of color, low-income individuals, households with one or no vehicle, older adults, children and other disproportionately affected groups have felt the burden of poor or no infrastructure. A number of recommendations in the plan will serve to improve, expand, and celebrate safe walking, biking, and rolling in Milton.

Finally, a Town of Milton Open Space and Recreation Plan will soon provide guidance for the Town's Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee, and help coordinate work between the Town's Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department, and Public Works Department in considering open space needs and priorities in their decision-making. It will also aid in coordinating the implementation of the Town's Master Plan goal of developing a conservation strategy identifying priority parcels as well as adapting the tools to facilitate their preservation. Lastly, this plan will provide guidance to the Town's Community Preservation Committee as it considers applications for open space projects.

## **Air Traffic**

Decades of scientific evidence show that noise may contribute to hearing loss, annoyance, sleep disruption, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disturbances, and exacerbation of anxiety and depression. It also has adverse impacts on communication, activities, learning, productivity, and quality of life. (American Public Health Assn, Policy Statement 202115, Oct 26, 2021)

Noise and air pollution generated by tens of thousands of aircraft using the 4L/4R flight paths over Milton each year is a significant public health concern expressed by many Milton residents in our qualitative interviews. Noise pollution arising from Boston Logan International air traffic in certain areas of Milton has also raised environmental health concerns among residents. Residents have voiced that these health issues may disproportionately affect specific segments of the community, while others remain relatively unaffected.

Besides noise, some residents have also expressed concern about trace metal soil contamination from fuels. One study, conducted by environmental health graduate students at Boston University found no soil contamination, but they recommended further study.

An Airplane Noise Advisory Committee has been established by the Milton Select Board to address resident concerns. Town leaders are seeking further study and remedial action by the Federal Aviation Administration and Massport. To file a noise complaint, residents can visit <https://www.townofmilton.org/home/pages/airplane-noise>. Meetings, reports and updates can be found on the Town of Milton website.



## Belonging and Social Cohesion

Based on the BID Milton Survey, most Milton residents feel that Milton is a place where they belong, can find support, and make a difference.

### BID MILTON SURVEY RESULTS (N=200)

- I feel like I belong in Milton: **90%**
- There are people and/or organizations in my community that support me during times of stress and need: **79%**
- I feel that all Milton residents can make Milton a better place: **97%**

However, many indicate that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on social cohesion, which still persists. Other residents cited structural barriers such as a lack of a centralized downtown area that prevents a fostering of social cohesion. Some people (including youth) identify themselves by where they live in town, such as “East or West Milton.”

Several focus groups mentioned how isolation-especially among older adults living alone is a concern. Many of them have deceased spouses or family members that have moved away and they lack transportation options. Clergy noted that, because many older residents want to remain in their single-family homes, we need to connect them to more supports.

While many residents indicated that they have strong feelings of belonging, residents of color in focus groups specifically expressed feelings of a lack of inclusion. They also said that there is a lack of cultural diversity in the types of activities and sports offered in the Town or in Town personnel. These findings largely match the findings of the Select Board’s Advisory Committee on Equity and Social Justice for All.

Finally, numerous focus groups indicated that information flow could be improved to enhance social connections. New residents, renters, immigrants, and people of color are especially unaware of the various events, resources and opportunities that are available in Milton. Focus groups pointed to an “insider culture” existing in Milton, and these closed networks of friends and neighbors are how many people get their information. If you are not part of these networks, it’s harder to come by information. Many suggested new, innovative and linguistically appropriate strategies for fostering communications community-wide.



## Discrimination

According to Dr. David Williams, Professor of Public Health at Harvard University, “the effects of experiencing discrimination, in both institutional and individual contexts, can accumulate over time and trigger an array of health problems, including elevated blood pressure, heart disease, and even premature aging or mortality, among others.”

Based on the BID Milton survey, some Milton residents have expressed that they have experienced discrimination in their daily lives in a variety of settings (though not exclusively here in Milton)—especially regarding their race, age, and gender.

## BID MILTON SURVEY RESULTS (2022)

(N=200 MILTON ADULTS-SOME DIDN'T ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS)

*You receive worse service than other people at stores, restaurants, or service providers:*

- Yes: 48
- Never: 137

*Landlords or realtors refused to rent or sell you an apartment or house:*

- Yes: 20
- Never: 161

*Healthcare providers treat you with less respect or provide worse services to you compared to other people:*

- Yes: 27
- Never: 156

*You are unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, threatened, or abused by the police:*

- Yes: 25
- Never: 159

Type of discrimination selected as main reason (presumably) for above treatment:

- Ableism: 2
- Ageism: 9
- Income / education level: 2
- Religion: 0
- Weight / body size: 2
- Homophobia: 2
- Racism: 12
- Sexism: 8
- Transphobia: 3
- Xenophobia: 5

One recurring theme that surfaced from the focus group with people of color centered around their experiences of racism, especially concerning those of lower socioeconomic status. Focus group discussions also revealed experiences with racial profiling in particular. Many interviewees expressed the need to better foster an environment of sensitivity, understanding and inclusivity, including sensitivity trainings. They also raised the need to create spaces for dialogue and education to advance social cohesion and inclusivity.

There were expressions of an urgent need to more robustly address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within Milton, including addressing language barriers which make it difficult for some residents to access the services they need. Key informants interviews from the food pantry and the Milton health system identified language as a barrier to accessing these essential services. Providing translated materials, multilingual communication channels, and language assistance services were some of the suggested strategies.

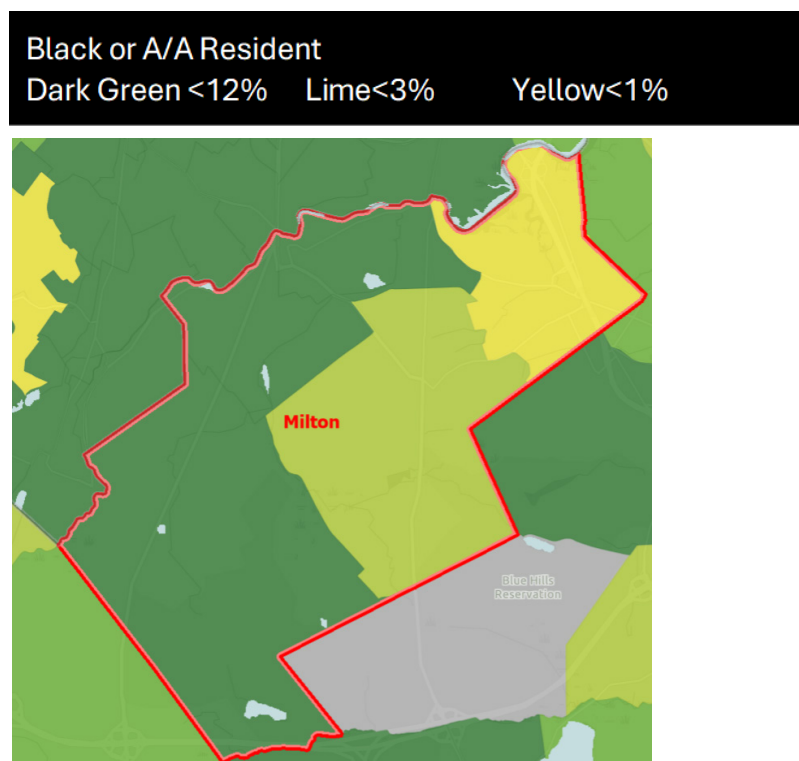
Interviews also revealed the impact of racial and social disparities on residents' mental health and overall well-being-especially for the children. The YRBS 2022 survey revealed that many teens, especially racial and sexual minority youth, have felt they have been poorly treated because of their minority status:

## YRBS (2022) SURVEY: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PERCEIVED EXPERIENCES OF PREJUDICE

- **78%** Asian American, **66%** Black or African American, **66%** of Other Race, and **61%** Hispanic students reported ever being treated badly (anywhere) due to race/ethnicity compared with **15%** of White students
- **55%** of sexual minority students reported ever being treated badly due to their sexual orientation compared with **8%** of heterosexual students

## De Facto Residential Segregation

A disproportionate number of black and brown residents continue to reside in the northwest side of town, near the Mattapan line, as depicted in the map below crafted by the state of Massachusetts. (GIS map)



## Safety

Milton residents generally feel safe living in the community.

- My community feels safe: 99% (BID Milton Survey)

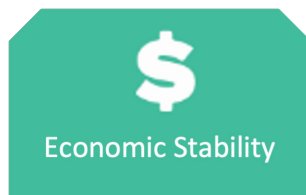
In 2021, Milton was named one of the 100 safest communities in the US by the online community safety resource *Safewise*, with significantly fewer violent and property crimes than the state or nation. They ranked Milton as the fourth safest community in MA. Violent crime data from the MCHDT portal also reinforces these findings.

That said, safety is still an issue of concern from the perspectives of certain Milton parents, students, and families. Some people of color, LGBTQIA+ residents, and people of minority religious backgrounds have heightened fears about being targeted, especially following visible acts of hate, explained members of the Milton Interfaith Clergy Association. These acts diminish targeted members' sense of safety and community belonging. The Milton Coalition's Parent Survey (2022) indicated that school safety and bullying were among the most concerning issues that parents had for their children. Other parents in a focus group mentioned their concerns about gun violence. Feeling unsafe can be traumatic, especially for children.

Some specific high school cohorts indicated they felt unsafe in the YRBS (2022):

- 11% of sexual minority students reported not going to school in the last 30 days because they felt unsafe, compared with 5% of heterosexual students
- 17% of sexual minority students reported being electronically bullied in the past 12 months, compared with 9% of heterosexual students
- 24% Asian American, 24% Hispanic, and 21% Black or African American students reported being bullied in the last 12 months due to their race/ethnicity, compared with 4% of White students.

For health equity to thrive, safety must be experienced by all residents.



## Employment

A very high percentage of Milton residents enjoy gainful employment. The 3.8% unemployment rate in Milton of those 16 years of age and older is low (ACS, 2022). This social determinant of health bodes well for Milton, as chronically unemployed individuals tend to suffer more from stress-related illnesses such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, heart disease, and arthritis.

## Incomes

Milton's median household income is significantly higher than the state in 2022. Yet, there are significant income disparities in Milton, with about 31% of households living at or below the state's median income, and 42% of households earning in the highest brackets of over \$200k per year.

From a health standpoint, individuals with low household incomes tend to have a higher prevalence of disease and lower life expectancy than people in high-income households. There is an increase in stress associated with being on the lower end of the income spectrum. Individuals with a higher burden of stress in adulthood tend to have higher body mass indexes, higher smoking rates, higher alcohol consumption and lower physical activity after adjusting for age. Individual and household incomes impact family stability as well as food and housing security<sup>21</sup>. It should also be noted that financial difficulties in a family can be a source of emotional trauma, especially for children. Research clearly shows that students from lower income households typically face more learning challenges than students from more affluent households.<sup>22</sup>

## MILTON HOUSEHOLD INCOMES, ACS 2022

- The median household income \$170,144 is higher than the state average of \$94,488
- 42% of households earned over \$200k/year, compared with 17% in MA
- 31% of households earn less than \$100k/year
- 6% of Milton households live below the poverty line, compared to 10% in MA
- 14.5% of MPS students are considered low income (DESE, 2022)
- 39% of renters and 29% of homeowners without a mortgage spent at least 35% of their incomes on housing costs (ACS 2021)

Key informant interviews revealed that:

- Lower income residents are frequently just above the cut-off that would make them eligible for needed services and financial assistance.
- "SOLO Agers" (those that are single, not married, no children/family) are struggling because they carry household expenses alone.
- Many older residents are struggling financially. While their homes have high value, their incomes are insufficient to sustain them.

Older adults (65+) and young adults (18-34) experience disproportionately higher rates of poverty in Milton, at 9% each (ACS, 2022). Town employees and clergy also noted, in focus groups, the financial struggles of our older citizens, particularly those who are homeowners.

Census data also demonstrate that 17% of Black residents live below the poverty line, significantly higher than any other racial or ethnic group. The Milton Residents Fund, where detailed demographic records are maintained, indicate that residents of color (African American, Haitian, Hispanic) are needing financial assistance at higher rates than white residents. Most recipients are low-income employed workers facing unforeseen circumstances that require financial assistance such as medical and utility bills.

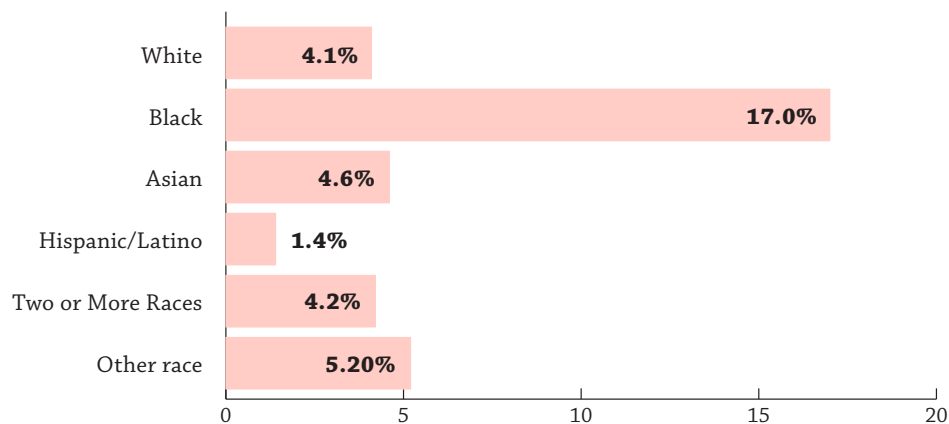
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**21** United Health Foundation, America's Health Rankings

**22** Department of Early and Secondary Education, 2022

## PERCENTAGE OF MILTON RESIDENTS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL BY RACE/ETHNICITY

American Community Survey, 2022

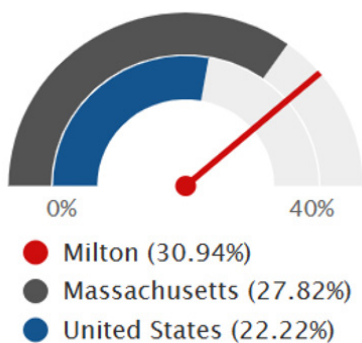


### Food Access and Insecurity

Healthy foods have become increasingly available through a vibrant Farmer's Market, Brookwood Community Farm, and private vendors, including an increasing number of restaurants offering healthier choices. SNAP benefits are becoming more widely accepted by these establishments, and the coupon dollars are being enhanced by the new state Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).

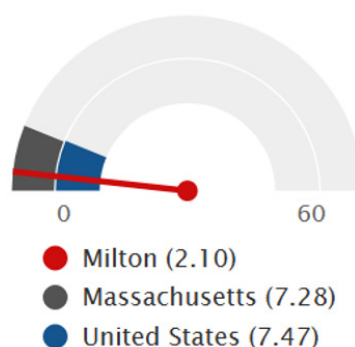
However, according to MCHDT in 2021, Milton has food access challenges, and fewer retailers in Milton accept SNAP (food coupon) benefits per eligible population than the state or nation. As many as 8,356 residents are considered to have low food access, and the percent of Milton's population is higher than the state or nation.

Percent Population with Low Food Access



Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas dataset

SNAP-Authorized Retailers, Rate (Per 10,000 Population)



2021 US Dept of Agriculture

An MDPH *Mass in Motion* (MIM) grant was obtained by the Milton Health Department to enhance opportunities for healthy eating and active living, as well as to better assess and address food insecurity in Milton. Through an MIM assessment with subject matter experts, it is clear that lower income residents are experiencing food insecurity. First Responders noted that isolated older adults are found, at times, to be malnourished or dehydrated.

Various assessments also identified numerous personal and systemic barriers to accessing affordable healthy foods, as follows:

#### *BARRIERS TO ADDRESSING FOOD SECURITY AND ACCESS:*

##### *Personal Barriers*

- Food is expensive in light of competing costs for medications/healthcare, gas, home repairs, and other essentials.
- There are feelings of desperation, pride, and stigma associated with not having enough food and seeking help.
- Lack of allergy-free food options (e.g., gluten free)
- Lack of culturally/ethnically sensitive food options
- Students indicate that healthy foods are difficult to come by and that unhealthy foods are easily accessible and cheaper (Youth Focus Group, BID Milton)

##### *Systems Barriers*

- Lack of dependable and comprehensive data collection, so it is difficult to assess the need, create appropriate programming, and measure success.
- Organizations are not effectively collaborating or communicating to find solutions.
- No community infrastructure/resources/staffing for congregate meals.
- Transportation difficulties.

The CHA Assessment found that some of those who are eligible for economic food assistance are not necessarily taking advantage of these available resources. About half of Milton families who are eligible to participate in the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) nutrition program are enrolled in the program. The Milton enrollment is even lower than the state rate. Children who are not properly nourished in their first five years of age are at increased risk of adverse health outcomes.

### **ENROLLED MILTON RESIDENTS IN WIC (2022)**

Community	Eligible	Enrolled	Participation Rate
Milton	235	126	53.6%
State	114,105	193,361	59%

Citation: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/women-infant-and-children-wic-program-data>

Common barriers to national WIC participation, according to the United Health Foundation's America's Health Rankings, include misunderstanding of the program, time away from work to apply, transportation issues, and language and cultural barriers. Addressing these barriers could benefit the health of lower income Milton families with young children by:

- Reducing food insecurity.
- Lowering risk of infant mortality, especially for Black individuals.
- Reducing risk of obesity and increasing healthy relationships with foods.
- Improving cognitive development.

## Housing

Housing is an essential component of health and well-being. According to the MA Department of Public Health (MDPH), housing conditions and affordability are linked to a variety of health issues, from asthma to nutrition to depression. Housing was identified often by community members, through interviews and surveys, as a critical social determinant of health and they stressed the need for housing solutions suitable for all income levels and capabilities.

### *AFFORDABILITY*

Affordability and stability in housing refer to whether a person can pay for their home and keep up with payments. Usually, housing is seen as a cost burden if it costs 30% or more of what a household earns. When people can afford their homes, they feel more in control of where they live. This can reduce stress and improve mental health. Being able to afford housing is also linked to better health outcomes and behaviors, like being able to buy medicine and following health advice. Kids in affordable homes are more likely to be at a healthy weight and hit important growth stages. (MCHDT).

**864 renters** and **2,081 homes** in Milton are considered to be cost burdened and about **12% of all Milton households** are considered to be “severely burdened” (ACS, 2018-2022)

The results of both the BID Milton (2022) and Milton Community Health (2023) surveys have made it clear that housing affordability is a challenge in Milton. In the BID Milton survey, only 45% of participants felt that Milton housing was affordable for people with different income levels. Creating more affordable housing was a top recommendation for improving community wellbeing in both surveys. Moreover, a number of key informants expressed concerns about how lower income and older adult homeowners struggle with the costs of property maintenance.



## KEY HOUSING AFFORDABILITY FACTS IN MILTON

- As of 2023, the average value of a single-family home in Milton was **\$936,000** (Chief Assessor) while the average home price in MA was **\$608,542** (Motley Fool)
- **18%** of housing in Milton is renter-occupied, which is much less than the state rate of **32%**. (ACS, 2021)
- **39%** of renters use over **35%** of their household income on housing costs, contributing to economic instability (ACS, 2016-2020)

The Select Board's Advisory Committee on Equity and Social Justice for All points out that Milton's lack of affordable housing disproportionately impacts people of color. The chart below reinforces the contention that Black residents are less likely to be homeowners.

## RENTER OCCUPIED HOUSING BY RACE ALONE

Report Area	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Multiple Races	Some Other Race	White
Milton	0.00%	0.00%	42.73%	8.90%	0.00%	11.94%
Massachusetts	60.48%	44.06%	63.62%	60.87%	68.94%	31.47%
United States	44.96%	38.43%	56.88%	45.52%	54.91%	28.87%

Data Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018-22. → [Show more details](#)

Based on a GIS Map produced by the Milton Department of Engineering, indicating the locations of multi-family housing in Milton, most two-and three-family houses- which are often rental properties- are concentrated in the northwest side of town and in East Milton.

While the great majority of residents are homeowners or renters, as of the year 2022, Milton's homeless population was 1,050 in total, or 0.13 per 100 total population. This rate is lower than the state's reported homeless rate of 0.22 per 100 population (HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 2022). In 2020, there were 14 Milton students that were homeless.(US Dept of Education, Ed Facts).

### HOUSING QUALITY

The State Sanitary Code establishes minimum standards for housing to protect the health, safety and well-being of occupants and the public. The Milton Health Department staff receive calls from renters with concerns or complaints of substandard housing. The Health Department then inspects for violations and may cite the landlord or occupant, and enforce correction orders. The Health Department has inspected many homes where the sanitary and safety conditions are less than optimal or in violation of housing codes. Many times, occupants are afraid to call the health department in fear of retaliation from their landlord, so they continue to live in these unsanitary conditions. The Health Department believes the town could benefit by a more formalized Healthy Homes Program to help prevent and better address these unhealthy housing conditions.



## Health System Assessment

Overall, Norfolk County residents have better access to clinical care than the nation as a whole, based on data derived from the 2023 County Health Rankings. Residents have nearly universal health insurance coverage. Residents also have better access to primary care physicians (PCPs) and dentists than the state and the nation, based on provider to population ratios. However, based on interviews with local residents and providers, wait times for PCP, specialists, and mental health treatment providers can be challenging. Furthermore, there are concerns about a lack of adequate hospital discharge planning and follow-up for the older (65+) population.

Access to Clinical Care - Norfolk County, 2023 (County Health Rankings 2023)			
Providers	Norfolk County	MA	US
Primary Care	800:1	970:1	1310:1
Dentists	810:1	930:1	1380:1
Mental Health Providers	150:1	140:1	340:1
Insurance	98%	97%	90%

The chart above indicates population:provider ratios. The following sections provide more specific information on the availability of health services to Milton residents.

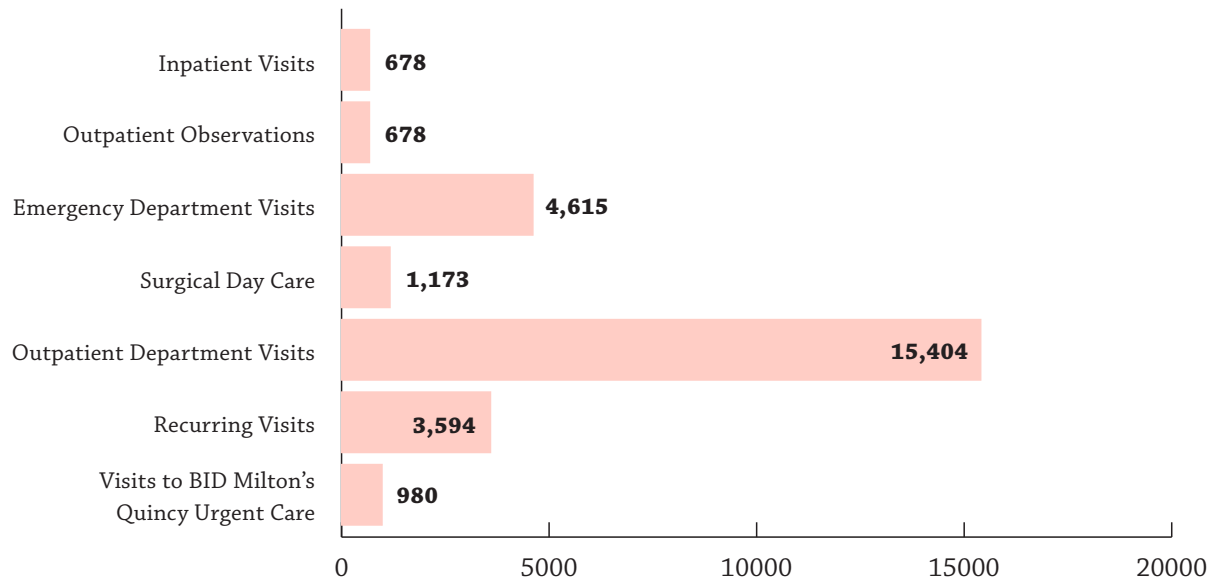
### a. Medical & Dental Care

Milton residents have ready access to, within its borders as well as in the greater Boston and South Shore areas, a variety of high-quality private and non-profit medical and dental services, both inpatient and outpatient. There are also nearby urgent care centers, private practitioners, group practices, comprehensive community health centers, and specialty providers. In addition, 99% of Milton residents are covered by some form of health insurance. However, more recent shortages in health care personnel can make waiting times for appointments a challenge, according to residents and providers alike. For some, especially older adults and disabled residents, limited accessible transportation to medical appointments can render access to care sometimes difficult.

There is one hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess -Milton (BID Milton), located within Milton's borders. According to BID Milton's data, Milton residents accounted for the following total number of hospital visits between October 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022. Most of these hospital visits were for outpatient and emergency department care. The numbers represent total visits of Milton residents to the hospital, not the number of individuals seeking care.

## NUMBER AND TYPE OF VISIT BY MILTON RESIDENTS TO BID MILTON

Oct. 1, 2021 - Sept. 30, 2022

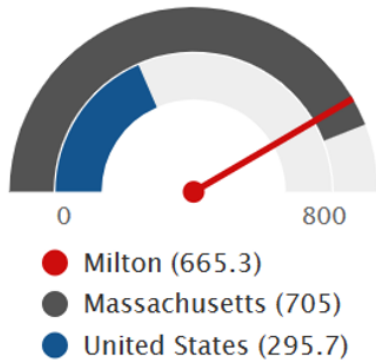


There are many other nearby general and specialty health and hospital systems which Milton residents also use. In addition, the public school district has a team of school nurses who are tasked with addressing students' medical and social service issues, but some have noted that they are in short supply.

### b. Behavioral Health Care

The mental health needs of youth, adults and older adults are growing, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Milton Police Department and public school system staff, as well as BID Milton statistics. For many Milton residents, accessing outpatient and inpatient behavioral health treatment services whether for addressing mental health or substance use needs, can be challenging. Accessing these services readily may be especially difficult for those with economic, mobility and language support needs. Data in the graph below, from the 2022 CMS National Provider Identifier file indicates that the mental health care provider rate in Milton is less than the state. However, the state recently created a "Roadmap for Behavioral Health Reform" that has augmented services by establishing a new 24/7 multilingual Massachusetts Behavioral Health Line and a network of Community Behavioral Health Centers (the closest to Milton is Aspire Health Alliance in Quincy), and a well-established 24/7 Substance Use Help Line. Further, there is a new national 24/7 Suicide Prevention Line. Together, these resources are making the system easier to access and navigate, according to the Milton Health Department's Community Social Worker.

### Mental Health Care Provider Rate (Per 100,000 Population)



Source: 2022 CMS National Provider Identifier File

Town-based behavioral health resources exist but are insufficient to address demand. The Milton Health Department employs a full-time licensed Community Health Social Worker who can connect families to a range of private and public behavioral health treatment services. The Milton Health Department also oversees The Milton Coalition, formerly known as the Milton Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, which serves as an extraordinary local resource for promoting best practices and providing information around the prevention and treatment of mental health and substance use disorders, especially regarding youth. Their unique coalition model fosters strong community partnerships, and they robustly involve youth in their community improvement efforts through the youth-led organization, Milton Youth Advocates for Change (MYAC).

The Milton Police Department (MPD) also has staff resources to address behavioral health needs in the community. They utilize their in-house clinical social worker as a co-responder for addressing substance use and mental health crises, access to jail diversion programs, de-escalation support, and follow-up.

While few private mental health treatment providers are available within Milton's borders, there are nearby private practitioners and non-profit organizations serving Milton residents. The organizations include Aspire Health Alliance, Baystate Mental Health Services, and Interfaith Social Services. Nearby community health centers in Quincy, Dorchester and Mattapan, and other nearby agencies, can also help residents of all incomes and/or of diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, as well as agencies such as the Haitian Mental Health Network and Quincy Asian Resources. There is also increasing access to telehealth services.

Finally, the Milton Public School District (MPS) Adjustment Counselors and Nurses regularly refer students and their families in need of behavioral health treatment, whether for mental health or substance use treatment. There are also School Resource Officers at the upper-level schools to work with students at behavioral risk. MPS also sponsors social-emotional programs and various assessments for students and parents. The School Committee has a Wellness Committee and Policy Statement to coordinate these efforts.

## c. Public Health Services

### MILTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT

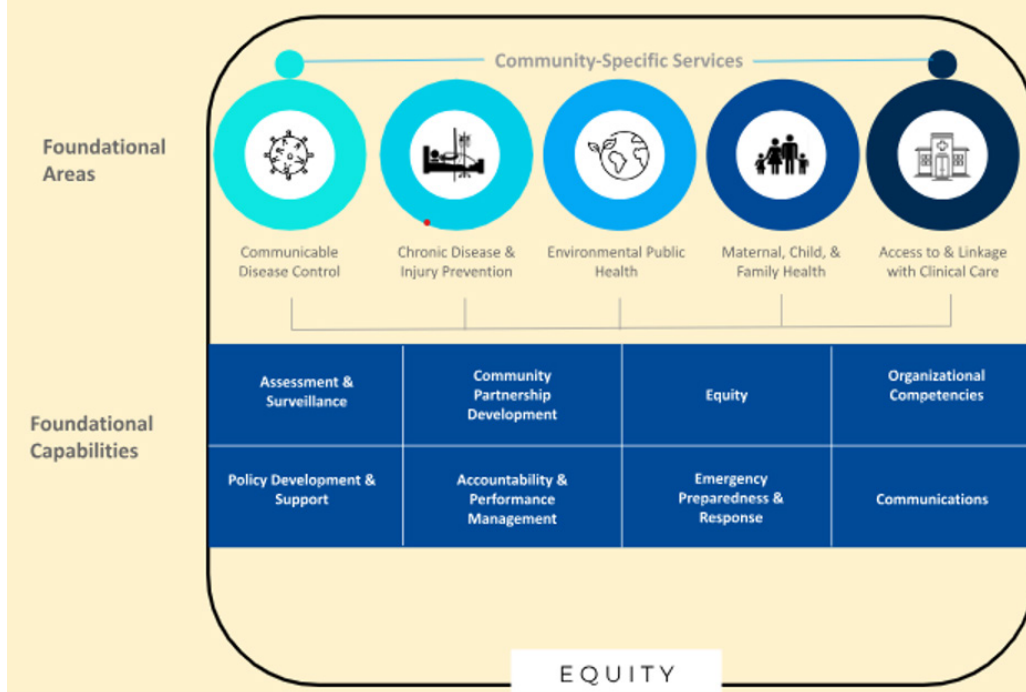
Milton Health Department staffing has increased since 2019 when they had just 2 full time staff to today's committed professional team of 4 full time positions of Health Director, Assistant Health Director, Health Agent, and Community Health Social Worker as well as part time positions of Senior Administrative Clerk and Public Health Nurse. Grant-funded part-time positions include two staff members directing The Milton Coalition and a Community Wellness Coordinator. The Milton Health Department has numerous state mandated health duties and extensive responsibilities that are vast and expansive and current staffing levels are strained to keep up with them.

### MILTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Animal quarantine & rabies control
- Arbovirus Surveillance/mosquito control (EEE/WNV)
- Burial permits
- Camp inspections
- Community outreach referrals (SNAP, Health insurance enrollment assistance)
- Emergency preparedness planning
- Resident and family support
- Food and financial referrals (legal/utility assistance)
- Food safety
- Health clinics
- Health education
- Method of acquiring resources
- Housing inspections
- Immunization clinics
- Infectious disease surveillance
- Mental health referrals\*
- Pool & pond inspections/water quality
- Rodent Control & education
- Septic system inspections
- Sharps Disposal
- Short term counseling
- Substance use prevention
- Tobacco control

The graphic below, produced by the national Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), depicts the baseline services and competencies that governmental health departments should be offering to their communities, with health equity being a cross-cutting feature. While staffing at the Milton Health Department is currently insufficient to address the full set of recommended foundational capabilities and competencies recommended by PHAB, there is some cause for hope that state legislation (SAPHE 2.0) will soon be passed to increase the capacities of local health departments to carry out their work more efficiently and effectively. Staffing resources for prevention, health promotion, health communications, partnership development, and epidemiology are sorely lacking. ***Since many acute and chronic health conditions, as well as injuries and infectious diseases, are preventable with these public health capacities, it is important for towns to invest in their public health infrastructure, as public health services save municipal costs and lives.***

## Foundational Public Health Services



## PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHY MILTON (PHM)

The town of Milton has numerous residents who work in the public health profession. Some of them volunteer on the Board of Directors of the Partnership for a Healthy Milton, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization created in 2018 to promote prevention resources and health equity in the town through policies, systems and environmental change. Its members serve on the CHA Community Advisory Group, and they are currently launching the implementation of their strategic plan.

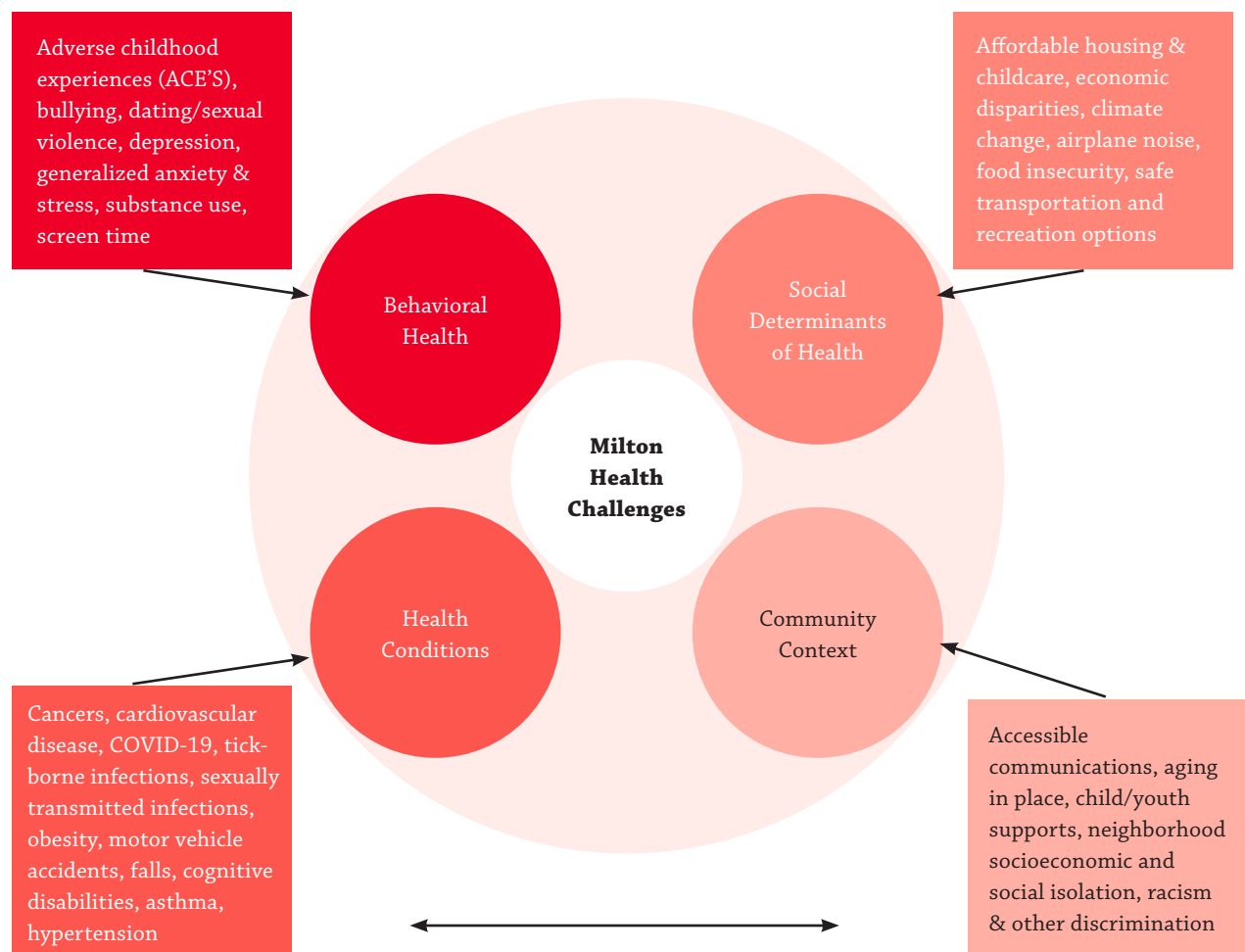
# Conclusion

## Health and Wellbeing: A Strength for Milton

Based on the available quantitative data collected on overall community health status, Milton residents of all ages appear to enjoy better health than the rest of the state on many important measures. For example, the average life expectancy at birth for a Milton resident is about 83 years old, higher than the national or state life expectancy of 79 or 81 years old (MCHDT). Moreover, the Milton age-adjusted and premature mortality rates are notably lower than the state average. A smaller percentage of residents live with a disability in Milton than in the state as a whole. Milton public high school students and older adults (65+) fared favorably compared to the state on most health and wellbeing survey indicators. Furthermore, social determinants of health indicators are strong in Milton—such as income, education, the natural environment, and feelings of belonging.

## Health Challenges

The following graphic depicts the key health challenges in the community.





## Potential Solutions: The Community Speaks

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health is of great interest to Milton residents. The 410 adult respondents to the Milton Health Department's Community Health Survey indicated which strategies they would like to see pursued to make Milton a healthier community. The top ten suggestions included:

- More organized social opportunities for youth (37.8%)
- Better roads and traffic infrastructure (36.8%)
- More respect and inclusion for diverse members of the community (36.6%)
- More affordable housing (34.6%)
- Better sidewalks and walking trails (30.2%)
- Better access to mental health services (28.5%)
- Less airplane traffic (27.0%)
- A community center (26.6%)
- More available and affordable childcare (24.6%)
- Centralized source of town wide information about programs, events & town resources (22.7%)

In addition to the priorities garnered from the Milton Community Health Survey, the qualitative interviews elicited specific recommendations from community members of all ages and backgrounds. As ideas continue to be collected, it is recommended to proactively seek out and engage underrepresented groups (such as people of color and youth) to leverage inclusive solutions.

## Policies, Procedures and Systems Changes

In addition to the community initiatives suggested throughout this report, there were town wide policies, procedures and systems change recommendations to promote a healthier community.

Recommendations included:

- Expanding public health promotion initiatives at the Milton Health Department to better address the prevention of chronic and infectious diseases and promote behavioral health.
- Fostering a *Health in All Policies* community orientation to ensure that all town policies take into consideration the health impacts of their actions on residents.
- Creating more intentional collaborations and partnerships among town departments, committees, agencies, and businesses through creating a Town Wide Health and Human Services Consortium. The Consortium should be composed of town and school departments as well as business and community-based programs to address the town's most vulnerable residents including low income, disabled, isolated, and marginalized groups.
- Cultivating proactive, innovative and linguistically appropriate mechanisms to communicate to the public about programs, resources, and other ways to become involved in town affairs, especially geared to more isolated and marginalized groups such as older adults, renters, immigrants, and lower income residents.

- Developing policies and programs to promote healthy and affordable housing.
- Improving and standardizing data collection procedures, to track demographic trends and population cohorts that may benefit by supplementary services or new policies to improve community wellbeing and equity.
- Addressing townwide working conditions including staffing shortages, lack of physical office space, and lack of flexible work schedules. Address building upgrades and expansion to better house town services and public meeting space.
- Engaging in proactive efforts to promote staff diversity in all departments.
- Addressing food insecurity by leveraging the “Mass in Motion” grant funded position and seeking creative opportunities around food distribution, and food access.
- Expanding indoor and outdoor physical fitness and recreational opportunities for adults
- Expanding intra town transportation to help those without easy access to town services, supermarkets and medical appointments.
- Targeting outreach and programs to environmental justice areas, where concentrations of lower income residents reside.
- Pursuing AARP accreditation to achieve *Age Friendly Milton* status, especially for older adults and teens.



World Health Organization Healthy Aging Domains Framework, graphic provided by UMass Boston.

# Community Health Improvement Plan

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## Overview

A Community Health Improvement Plan, or CHIP, is an action-oriented strategic plan outlining the priority health goals and the data-informed strategies that can lead to measurable improvements in the health and wellbeing of the community. CHIPs are created through a community-wide planning process that uses community health assessment data to identify the most pressing health problems and impactful strategies for addressing health improvements over time. This CHIP is intended to be implemented over a five-year timeline.

## Vision and Purpose

**All Milton residents will have abundant opportunities in our community to pursue a healthy lifestyle and to achieve social, emotional and physical well-being.**

The CHIP planning process will provide a roadmap that:

- Promotes community-wide understanding of Milton's health vulnerabilities and assets
- Recognizes key factors which influence the wellbeing of our diverse community
- Prioritizes appropriate strategies for improving community health and wellbeing
- Furthers health equity
- Leverages more resources and data to support health
- Fosters community engagement and partnerships for making Milton the healthiest community possible

## Forces of Change Assessment

The Milton Health Department (MHD) brought together their Community Health Assessment Advisory Group to engage in a *Forces of Change Assessment*. The purpose of this assessment was to identify the trends, factors, and events that are likely to influence quality of life in the community and/or impact the work of the health department over the coming five years. This assessment is important for anticipating potential opportunities or obstacles in pursuing specific strategies that comprise the CHIP. The following opportunities and obstacles were identified in this assessment:

## Opportunities

### Grants and Funding

- MHD has a “Mass in Motion” state grant to promote healthy eating and active living, and addressing food insecurity
- MHD is in receipt of Opioid Settlement Funds in the amount of \$412,719 to date.
- The Milton Coalition received a second round of funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a five-year period
- SAPHE 2.0 state legislation recently passed, which will supplement, not supplant staffing and financial resources available to local health departments
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield, AARP, MAPC, Beth Israel Deaconess-Milton and state public health department competitive grants are made available on a regular basis

### Collaborations

- Regional Collaborations exist with other local health departments, such as Norfolk County 8 and Mass in Motion.
- Good relationships are enjoyed with nearby health institutions and agencies
- Partnership for a Healthy Milton, a local 501c3 organization, is invested in promoting community health and leading some CHIP priorities
- The Milton Coalition is an effective multi-sector collaboration addressing youth substance use
- Town Departments, such as Parks and Recreation, the Planning and Community Development Departments, Library, and Council on Aging prioritize the social determinants of health in their strategies, such as active living and social engagement
- There are numerous town initiatives addressing the wellbeing of community members such as the Climate Action Committee, Master Planning Implementation Committee, and the Equity and Social Justice for All Committee
- There are numerous academic institutions to help bolster CHIP initiatives

### Information and Resources

- Milton’s first Community Health Assessment has been completed
- A State Roadmap for Behavioral Health is increasing availability of mental health resources
- A Healthy Aging Assessment for Milton was conducted by the UMass Gerontology Institute, in collaboration with the Blue Hills Community Health Alliance
- The Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital-Milton produces a community health assessment and health improvement plan every three years, involving community leaders in the process

## Obstacles

### Systems

- Limited town revenues and space for new staff, programs, community meetings or capital projects
- Lack of coordinated townwide systems for addressing the health and social service needs of residents
- Town departments and organizations operate in silos
- Inconsistent and incomplete data and reporting on demographic or health indicators

- Lack of proactive systems for communicating with the public, especially to those most vulnerable and marginalized (low income, renters, people who speak different languages)
- Lack of understanding or funding of public health
- Differing opinions on land zoning approaches for commercial and affordable housing development

#### Population Shifts

- Rapidly growing populations of older adults (65+), children, and racially/ethnically diverse residents, with little resource planning for these changes
- Growing income disparities and poverty among residents

## Methodology

### Identification of Goals

The Milton Health Department identified three priority goals for best addressing the key findings in the Community Health Assessment. These goals will guide the development of the CHIP:

1. Reduce Preventable Chronic Conditions and Injuries
2. Improve Behavioral Health (mental health and substance use disorders)
3. Reduce Health Disparities in Health Outcomes and Experiences

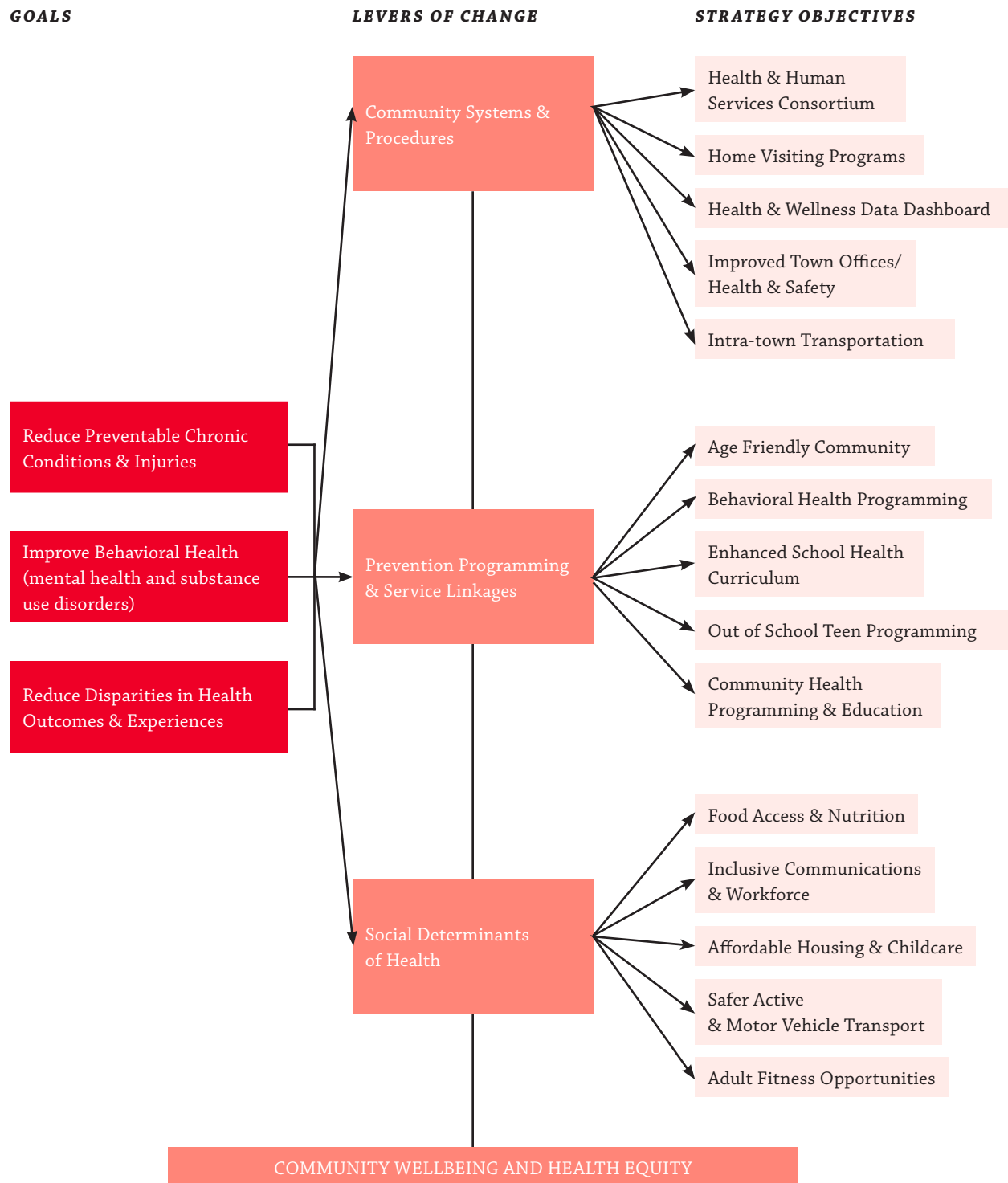
### Identification of Strategies

Throughout the Community Health Assessment process, all 8 focus group participants and 17 key informants were asked the question, “*What strategies do you think would be effective in improving the health of our community?*” The Milton Health Department consultant sifted through this qualitative data to identify promising strategies for addressing the three goals. In addition, the consultant asked the Milton Health Department’s staff for their community health improvement recommendations based on their experiences and observations. There were fifteen high-level strategies identified in all, and they were grouped into three categories called *Levers of Change*. The three Levers of Change consist of: *Systems and Procedures*; *Prevention Programming and Service Linkages*; and *Social Determinants of Health*. These three levers and fifteen strategies were brought forth to a community health improvement planning meeting for further feedback, recommendations and prioritization.

### Community Health Improvement Planning Process

On January 15, 2025, approximately 50 community leaders, representing a variety of town boards, committees, businesses and community organizations, attended a 2.5-hour CHIP planning meeting hosted at the Milton Council on Aging. The primary purpose of the meeting was to bring together people who are active in community groups, committees and town departments to foster appreciation of the health needs of our community and a willingness to collectively work on health improvement strategies over the coming five years.

The structure of the meeting included an overview of the purpose of the CHIP process, the vision and goals for the CHIP, a review of the Community Health Assessment findings, and a presentation of the fifteen high level strategies that emerged from the Community Health Assessment. The Logic Model for thinking about how the process all fits together was presented to the attendees, as depicted below:



The bulk of the meeting consisted of engaging participants in gathering and discussing their health improvement priorities. Participants were divided into three small groups, which were facilitated by Milton Health Department staff. Each group was presented with five strategies associated with a Lever of Change. Participants were asked to discuss what they liked or disliked about the list of strategies and were invited to add new suggestions to the list. They were then requested to prioritize the list using the evaluation criteria of feasibility and impact. Participants were instructed to vote for their top three strategies. Each small group had the opportunity to weigh in on all of the 15 strategies through a round-robin process.

Group facilitators tallied the votes and shared the top three strategies that emerged for each Lever of Change. Total votes are indicated below.

## **VOTE TALLIES**

### **Lever #1: Systems and Procedures**

- Strategy: Health and Human Services Consortium (28)
- Strategy: Home Visiting Programs (27)
- Strategy: Intra-town Transportation (27)
- Strategy: Health & Wellness Data Dashboard (20)
- Strategy: Improved Town Offices and Employee Health & Safety Programs (18)

### **Lever #2: Prevention Programming and Service Linkages**

- Strategy: Behavioral Health Programming and Support Groups (34)
- Strategy: Age Friendly Milton Designation (31)
- Strategy: Enhanced School Health Education Curriculum (21)
- Strategy: Out of School Teen Programming (20)
- Strategy: Community Health Programming and Education (15)

### **Lever #3: Social Determinants of Health**

- Strategy: Food Access/Insecurity and Nutrition (39)
- Strategy: Affordable Housing and Childcare (27)
- Strategy: Safer Active and Motor Vehicle Transportation (27)
- Strategy: Inclusive Communications and Workforce (17)
- Strategy: Adult Fitness Opportunities (13)

Before the conclusion of the meeting, there was a discussion about which of these strategies might have community organizations, departments or groups willing to take leadership on moving them forward.

The Milton Health Department presented the CHIP community meeting deliberations to the Partnership for a Healthy Milton for their input concerning which of the fifteen priorities held the most promise for community impact and potential for implementation over the coming five years. The final CHIP recommendations were then brought to the Board of Health for discussion and approval on June 10, 2025. The following chart represents the approved Town of Milton's priority strategies to be pursued over the coming five years



# Community Health Improvement Plan 2025-2030

## GOALS

**Reduce Preventable Chronic Conditions & Injuries**

**Improve Behavioral Health**

**Reduce Disparities in Health Outcomes & Experiences**

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES
Health & Human Services Consortium	A Consortium of government & community reps who collaboratively share information & address the needs of vulnerable residents	Milton Health Department BID Hospital Milton
Home Visiting Programs	Healthy Homes and/or Healthy Moms & Babies outreach programs	Milton Health Department
Intra-Town Transportation	Free shuttle or other vehicle to improve residents' circulation across town	Master Plan Implementation Committee sunsetting TBD & Partnership for a Healthy Milton
Health & Wellness Data Dashboard	Accessible community data revealing health and social determinant of health indicators over time	Partnership for a Healthy Milton
Behavioral Health Programming	Increased direct and referral services & support groups for those experiencing mental health & substance use challenges	Milton Health Department, Milton Board of Health and The Milton Coalition

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES
Out of School Teen Programming	Increase non-sports, pro social opportunities for teens	Youth Advisory Committee
Community Health Programming & Education	Increase prevention-oriented health programs & education in the community & schools	Milton Health Department BID Hospital Milton
Food Insecurity/Nutrition	Address access to healthy affordable foods, especially for low income individuals & teens	Milton Health Department via Mass in Motion Partnership
Safer Pedestrian & Motor Vehicle Transportation	Reduce traffic accidents through safer roadway design and pedestrian pathways, including sidewalks & crossways	Planning & Community Development
Inclusive Communications	Improve communication channels to marginalized populations	Partnership for a Healthy Milton, Equity, Social Justice for All Committee, Milton Health Department, & Town Administration

# Appendix A

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## Methods for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

### Data Collection

Seventeen key informant interviews and eight focus groups were conducted as part of the qualitative data collection process. The interviewers and focus group facilitators utilized semi-structured interview guides developed by the Community Health Assessment (CHA) team.

Key community stakeholders, also referred to as key informants (KI), were identified to participate in the interviews and focus groups. These key informants included individuals representing various community health and human service sectors as well as diverse community residents and leaders. Their valuable insights contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the community's health status and needs.

The Milton Health Department conducted a series of seven Focus Groups from January to March 2023, with an additional one involving Milton teens in 2022 by BID Milton, whose results were integrated into the analysis. These sessions were facilitated by experienced moderators, with designated note-takers, and most were recorded, except for two. The focus groups were organized into two main categories for the Community Health Assessment (CHA). One category comprised Milton residents, and the other comprised professionals working in the community.

The resident category encompassed four separate focus group cohorts: older adults, teens, People of Color, and the CHA Community Advisory Group, the latter primarily consisting of public health professionals. These sessions were 90 minutes long and held in the evenings at Town Hall. The other category consisted of individuals employed by town organizations or departments, such as First Responders, town employees, public school employees, and members of the Milton Interfaith Clergy Association. Due to time constraints of the workday, these sessions lasted 60 minutes, with fewer questions than those used for residents.

For data collection, semi-structured interview guides were utilized across all Focus Groups. These guides included core thematic questions to explore participants' perceptions of pressing health issues in the town, reasons behind these health challenges, and inquiries about potential solutions. Additional questions were sometimes introduced to gain insights into the unique experiences and contexts among specific community populations. The Moderator also inquired about the ease of accessing information and resources in the community, when time permitted.

The stakeholders involved in the key informant interviews and focus group guide included

- Community Leaders
- Town Employees & Administrators from various departments
- Milton Public School Staff & Administrators
- Community Advisory Group members
- Emergency critical care service personnel
- Health and social service providers
- Veterans
- Disability Commission Members
- Diverse Residents, including youth, older adults, parents, People of Color
- Clergy
- Business owners
- First Responders

## Community Health Survey

The development of the survey tool involved adapting CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and other community surveys to address the informational objectives of the Milton Public Health Department. The survey was administered electronically in English only, and paper surveys were made available upon request. The web-based survey was sent via Survey Monkey utilizing listservs, advertisements and social media.

The Survey Instrument can be found on the Milton Health Department website.

## Community Health Survey Questions:

1. Are you a Milton resident over the age of 18:
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Would you say your general physical health is: (choose one)
  - a. Excellent
  - b. Very good
  - c. Good
  - d. Fair
  - e. Poor
  - f. Don't know
3. What MAJOR impairments or health conditions, if any, limit your activities of daily living? (select all that apply)
  - a. No Major impairments
  - b. Arthritis/rheumatism
  - c. Back or neck problem
  - d. Overweight
  - e. Depression/anxiety/emotional problems
  - f. Hypertension/high blood pressure
  - g. Walking problem
  - h. Diabetes
  - i. Eye/vision problem
  - j. Heart Problem
  - k. Incontinence
  - l. Lung/breathing problems
  - m. Hearing problem
  - n. Fractures/bone/joint problems
  - o. Stroke problem
  - p. Cancer
  - q. COVID-19
  - r. Don't know/not sure
  - s. Cognitive (dementia/alzheimers)
  - t. Cognitive (learning)
  - u. Lyme Disease
4. Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression and/or other problems with emotions, did you experience poor mental health for more than two weeks in a row in the past year? (choose one)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not Sure
5. Now thinking about the mental health of others, which includes stress, depression and/or other problems with emotions, has anyone else in your household experienced poor mental health for more than two weeks in a row in the past year? (choose one)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not Sure
  - d. Not Applicable/I live alone
6. If yes to previous question, who in your household has experienced poor mental health for more than two weeks in a row in the past year? (choose all that apply)
  - a. Spouse/partner
  - b. Child
  - c. Other
7. How often do you get exercise? (Choose one)
  - a. 5 or more times per week
  - b. 3-4 times per week
  - c. 1-2 times per week
  - d. Rarely/never

8. If you rent a house/apartment, do you generally feel that your housing is safe and sanitary to live in?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. No
  - d. Not applicable (do not rent)
9. Do you have a primary care doctor?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
10. Does a current or prior COVID-19 infection continue to impact your physical health? (choose one)
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. A great deal
  - d. Never had COVID-19
11. Does a current or prior COVID-19 infection continue to impact your mental or social wellbeing? (choose one)
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Somewhat
  - c. A great deal
  - d. Never had COVID-19
12. Do you or someone else in your household misuse, or appear to be dependent on, alcohol or any drugs?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
13. If yes, who in your household is affected? (check all that apply)
  - a. Adult
  - b. Child (18 or younger)
14. Which substances? (Check all that apply)
  - a. Alcohol
  - b. Marijuana
  - c. Prescription drugs not used for their intended purpose
  - d. Illegal drugs
  - e. Others
15. In the following list, what do you think are the behaviors or circumstances which have the greatest negative impact on overall community health and wellbeing (choose up to five):
  - a. Alcohol misuse
  - b. Drug Misuse
  - c. Social media/screen time
  - d. Racism/Other forms of Discrimination
  - e. Stress/Depression
  - f. Distracted driving
  - g. Lack of exercise
  - h. Environment/Pollution
  - i. Bullying/Harassment
  - j. Poor eating habits
  - k. Being overweight
  - l. Unsecured firearms
  - m. Domestic violence/abuse
  - n. Tobacco use/vaping use
  - o. Not using helmets/head protection
  - p. Not using seat belts / child safety seats
  - q. Not getting regular health care
  - r. Unsafe sex
16. What are the most important things you would like to improve that would help to make Milton a healthier community? (choose up to five)
  - a. More organized social opportunities for youth
  - b. Better roads and traffic infrastructure
  - c. More respect and inclusion for diverse members of the community
  - d. More affordable housing
  - e. Better sidewalks and walking trails
  - f. Better access to mental health services
  - g. Less airplane traffic
  - h. A community center
  - i. More available & affordable childcare
  - j. Centralized source of townwide information about events, programs, and health resources
  - k. Better public transportation
  - l. Better access to affordable and healthy foods
  - m. Better parks and recreational opportunities
  - n. More arts and cultural events
  - o. More robust public health services & information
  - p. Cleaner environment Lower crime and violence

17. Gender Identity

- a. None of the above
- b. Male
- c. Female
- d. Non-binary

18. Age Grouping

- a. 18-25
- b. 26-39
- c. 40-54
- d. 55-64
- e. 65+

19. Which option best describes your sexual orientation

- a. Bisexual
- b. Gay/lesbian
- c. Heterosexual/straight
- d. A sexual orientation not listed here
- e. Prefer not to answer

20. Racial or ethnic groups you most identify with

- a. White/Caucasian
- b. Black/African American
- c. Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Haiti, Jamaica, or other Caribbean Island)
- d. Hispanic/Latino
- e. Asian (Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Asian Indian)
- f. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- g. American Indian or Alaska Native
- h. Multi-racial

## Interview Guides

The key informant and focus group interview guides covered a broad range of topics related to the health and wellbeing of Milton's residents. These topics included:

1. Overall Community Health: Participants were asked to share their perceptions of the overall health and wellbeing of the community compared to other communities.
2. Strengths and Assets: Participants were encouraged to identify strengths and resources available within the community that support the wellbeing of its residents.
3. Health Challenges for Youth, Adults and Older Adults: Participants were asked to share their perceptions of the most serious health problems or issues facing people in different age categories in the community. This included a discussion of health behaviors and environmental conditions contributing to these issues and community interventions.
4. Health Disparities and Special Health Needs: The assessment aimed to identify specific groups of people or neighborhoods that might be experiencing worse health outcomes and their associated challenges. Community-based approaches to address these

disparities were also explored.

7. Community Barriers and Solutions: The assessment aimed to uncover community-level factors preventing residents from living their healthiest lives and possible strategies to overcome them.

8. Health Information Sources: Participants were asked about the sources they and others use to obtain health-related information and whether they faced any difficulties in finding community resources.

9. Additional Recommendations: Participants were encouraged to share any further suggestions or thoughts on improving the health and wellbeing of Milton residents.

The data collected from interviews and focus groups were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. Initially, open coding was employed to identify emergent themes. Following that, a deductive coding approach was utilized to align identified themes with the assessment objectives and the goals of the community health assessment. Coding software, Dedoose, was used to assist in the analysis process. The qualitative information was analyzed by a public health consultant outside the community.

# Milton CHA Focus Group Guide

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us today. The Milton Health Department is a relatively small department in the Town of Milton and we exist to help promote and protect the health and wellbeing of our residents and workforce. Our goal is to get a better understanding of the health and wellbeing of our community, so we are engaging in our first community health assessment to find out what are the health challenges and needs of all our residents and what assets exist and need to be created to address them.

We understand that our residents have different life experiences and health conditions that are influenced by many factors including their ages, their years living here, their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, or other unique life experiences and we want to understand the ways in which these experiences impact their health and wellness in our community so that we can attend to everyone's needs as best we can. We have called together this group because we believe that you can help us gain a better understanding of XYZ residents because of your lived or working experiences here in Milton.

We have developed some questions that we hope you will answer as honestly as you can. We will not be revealing the names of who has said anything in this session. We will only be writing down the ideas that you share with us. For that reason, you can feel safe about saying anything here without fear of our using your individual name. Keep in mind, everyone in the room might not agree with you, and that's perfectly fine. Everyone's opinions are important. We may ask others in the group if they do agree or disagree with the idea being expressed, not the person who is expressing it. We want to respect everyone's opinions in the room, and not make judgements. At the same time, we want to understand if individual opinions are widely held.

We would like to record this conversation, after everyone has introduced themselves, so that we are sure to capture everything important being said. We will erase the recording after we transcribe the proceedings and not share it outside of the Health Department. However if anyone does not comfortable with recording this, we won't do it, or you can ask us to temporarily shut off the recorder for a particular comment.

## HAVE EVERYONE INTRODUCE THEMSELVES

This conversation will take about 90 minutes. Let's begin.

1. How would you describe the overall health of Milton residents?

PROBE: Do you think that most of our residents enjoy good health and wellbeing overall compared to other communities? Why do you say that?



2. What do you think are the most serious health challenges (or needs) facing Milton teens? When you think about this question, include any common diseases, injuries, disabilities, mental health, substance use or social conditions your neighbors might be facing. (Prioritize the responses to top 3, then ask the following probes)

PROBE: What individual health behaviors and/or factors in the community or home do you think might be contributing to these health issues you identified?

PROBE: What more can be done in the community, such as the Health Department or schools or agencies to address or improve these issues?

3. What do you think are the most serious health problems (or needs) facing Milton adults and seniors?

(Prioritize the responses to top 3, then ask the following probes)

PROBE: What health behaviors and/or community or home conditions might be contributing to these health issues for adults and seniors, in your opinion?

PROBE: What more can be done in the community, such as by the Health Department or other town departments or community-based organizations, to better address or improve these issues?

4. Do you think that there are specific groups of residents or neighborhoods in Milton which struggle more- or differently- with their own or their families' health?

- PROBE: What groups are they?
- PROBE: What do you believe to be their biggest health challenges?
- PROBE: What do you think are the community or family conditions or personal behaviors that might be contributing to these health struggles?
- PROBE: What can be done to make these challenges better?

5. Do you think Milton is a community where most people can find social connections and health information?

PROBE: Are there particular groups of residents who are not as well connected, and if so, who are they and why might this be so?

6. What do you view as Milton's most important strengths or assets that can be built on to help support the health and wellbeing of its residents?

Explain: We are looking for you to tell us about both the medical and non-medical strengths and resources that the community benefits by

7. Are there other community barriers, that have not been mentioned, which may be preventing residents from living their most healthy lives?

PROBE: What might we do to address the barriers you identified?

8. What other ideas do you have for improving access to information, policies or programs, in the community setting, to improve the health and wellbeing of Milton residents and the information they have access to?

PROBE: What more would you like the Milton Health Department to do?

9. Are there any other thoughts to help us understand how we can make Milton a healthier community for everyone?

# Key Informant Interview Guide

**Introduction:** I'm [INSERT NAME HERE] with the MILTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT. We are conducting a Community Health Assessment. This interview is an important step in our efforts to better understand the community's health status and needs of our residents and learn about the resources available to address them. The themes that emerge from the interviews will be used in our community improvement plan to bolster the health of the Town of Milton. While we will analyze the general themes we learn from all of these interviews, the information gathered from the individual interviews will be strictly confidential. Your knowledge would be very valuable, and, on behalf of the Milton Health Department staff and Board of Health, we thank you for making yourself available for this interview, which we anticipate will only take 45-60 minutes.

Before we begin, we want to make sure we are on the same page when discussing the health status of our community. So, from a public health perspective, we are referring to the diseases, injuries, disabilities, as well as the mental and behavioral health of our residents overall-including substance use. So our definition of health and wellbeing is very broad. We are also interested in learning about the individual behaviors that people engage in as well as the family or community conditions in which they live which contribute to -or might detract from -living a healthy life. Finally, we would like to understand if there are particular groups of people in our community who have special health needs so that we know how to address them.

1. First, tell me about yourself and/or the Milton organization you work with to help us understand how you are familiar with the community and if you have special knowledge about a particular group of people who live here.

2. How would you describe the overall health of our community?

PROBE: Do you think that most of our residents enjoy good health and wellbeing overall compared to other communities? Why do you say that?

3. What do you view as Milton's strengths or assets that currently support the wellbeing of its residents?

- We are looking for you to tell us about both the medical and non-medical strengths and resources that the community benefits by

4. What is your perception of the most serious health and wellbeing challenges (or issues) facing most adults in this community?

- And when thinking about health issues, please think broadly and include any diseases, injuries, disabilities, mental health, substance use or social issues they may face.

PROBE: What health behaviors, family situations or community and environmental conditions might be contributing to these health issues for adults, in your opinion?

PROBE: What as a community can we do to make them better?

5. What is your perception of the most serious health and wellbeing challenges (or issues) facing most seniors in this community?

- When thinking about health issues, please think broadly and include any diseases, injuries, disabilities, mental health, substance use or social issues they may face.

PROBE: What health behaviors, family situations or community and environmental conditions might be contributing to these health issues for seniors, in your opinion?

PROBE: What as a community can we do to make them better?

6. What is your perception of the most serious health problems (or issues) facing youth in this community?

- When thinking about health issues, please include any diseases, injuries, disabilities, mental health, substance use or social issues

PROBE: What health behaviors and/or community or environmental conditions might be contributing to these health issues for youth, in your opinion?

PROBE: What, as a community, can we do to make them better?

PROBE: How might you imagine the health department addressing these issues?

7. Do you think that there are other specific groups of people who live or work here, or neighborhoods, that may be experiencing worse health outcomes than others?

- What groups are they, and why do you think this is true?
- What do you believe to be their biggest health challenges?
- What can we as a community do to make this situation better?

8. Are there other community barriers which may be preventing residents from living their most healthy lives?

PROBE: What might we do to address them?

8. What else could be done to improve health and wellbeing of Milton residents?

9. How do people you know, including yourself, get the health information that you need?

PROBE: Do you, or others you know, have difficulty finding health resources? Do you search the Town of Milton's website, and specifically the health department's webpage, for resources?

10. Are there any other thoughts you have to help us understand how we can make Milton a healthier community?

11. Are there other people you think we should talk to? Have we covered everything you think is important?

**Close:** Thank you very much for your time. Your knowledge and insights will be very helpful to us. We expect to complete this phase of our information-gathering work in about [xx] months. Then the Health Department will issue a report and, using the data, develop a long-term plan of action. Would you like to become involved in some way? Thank you again.

# Appendix B

## Federal Poverty Levels:

### 2024 Poverty Guidelines: 48 Contiguous States (all states except Alaska and Hawaii)

Household/ Family Size	Dollars Per Year										
	50%	75%	100%	125%	130%	133%	135%	138%	150%	175%	185%
1	7,530.00	11,295.00	15,060.00	18,825.00	19,578.00	20,029.80	20,331.00	20,782.80	22,590.00	26,355.00	27,861.00
2	10,220.00	15,330.00	20,440.00	25,550.00	26,572.00	27,185.20	27,594.00	28,207.20	30,660.00	35,770.00	37,814.00
3	12,910.00	19,365.00	25,820.00	32,275.00	33,566.00	34,340.60	34,857.00	35,631.60	38,730.00	45,185.00	47,767.00
4	15,600.00	23,400.00	31,200.00	39,000.00	40,560.00	41,496.00	42,120.00	43,056.00	46,800.00	54,600.00	57,720.00
5	18,290.00	27,435.00	36,580.00	45,725.00	47,554.00	48,651.40	49,383.00	50,480.40	54,870.00	64,015.00	67,673.00
6	20,980.00	31,470.00	41,960.00	52,450.00	54,548.00	55,806.80	56,646.00	57,904.80	62,940.00	73,430.00	77,626.00
7	23,670.00	35,505.00	47,340.00	59,175.00	61,542.00	62,962.20	63,909.00	65,329.20	71,010.00	82,845.00	87,579.00
8	26,360.00	39,540.00	52,720.00	65,900.00	68,536.00	70,117.60	71,172.00	72,753.60	79,080.00	92,260.00	97,532.00
9	29,050.00	43,575.00	58,100.00	72,625.00	75,530.00	77,273.00	78,435.00	80,178.00	87,150.00	101,675.00	107,485.00
10	31,740.00	47,610.00	63,480.00	79,350.00	82,524.00	84,428.40	85,698.00	87,602.40	95,220.00	111,090.00	117,438.00
11	34,430.00	51,645.00	68,660.00	86,075.00	89,518.00	91,583.80	92,961.00	95,026.80	103,290.00	120,505.00	127,391.00
12	37,120.00	55,680.00	74,240.00	92,800.00	96,512.00	98,739.20	100,224.00	102,451.20	111,360.00	129,920.00	137,344.00
13	39,810.00	59,715.00	79,620.00	99,525.00	103,506.00	105,894.60	107,487.00	109,875.60	119,430.00	139,335.00	147,297.00
14	42,500.00	63,750.00	85,000.00	106,250.00	110,500.00	113,050.00	114,750.00	117,300.00	127,500.00	148,750.00	157,250.00

The federal poverty line is an income threshold established by the U.S. government to determine eligibility for various social services and assistance programs. It is calculated annually by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and varies based on the size of a household. The poverty line serves as a benchmark to assess the economic well-being of individuals and families, helping to identify those who are considered economically disadvantaged. Those whose incomes fall below this threshold are often eligible for benefits such as Medicaid, food assistance, and housing subsidies. The poverty line is critical for shaping policy and allocating resources aimed at reducing poverty and providing support to the nation's most vulnerable populations.