

**Lessons Learned:  
The Hard Way and Other Ways  
The Boston Indicators Project**

**DATA DAY 2012**

**January 27, 2012**

Click on 

[www.bostonindicators.org](http://www.bostonindicators.org)

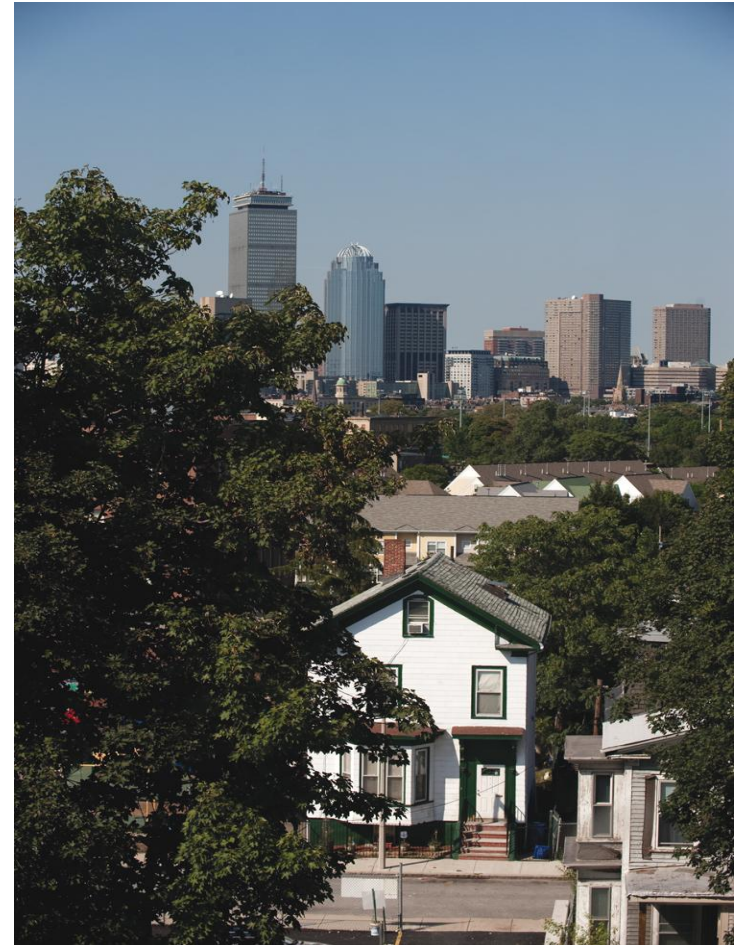
for an enhanced website about Boston and the region—with data, maps, charts and links

# The Boston Indicators Project

A partnership of the Boston Foundation, City of Boston and Metropolitan Area Planning Council

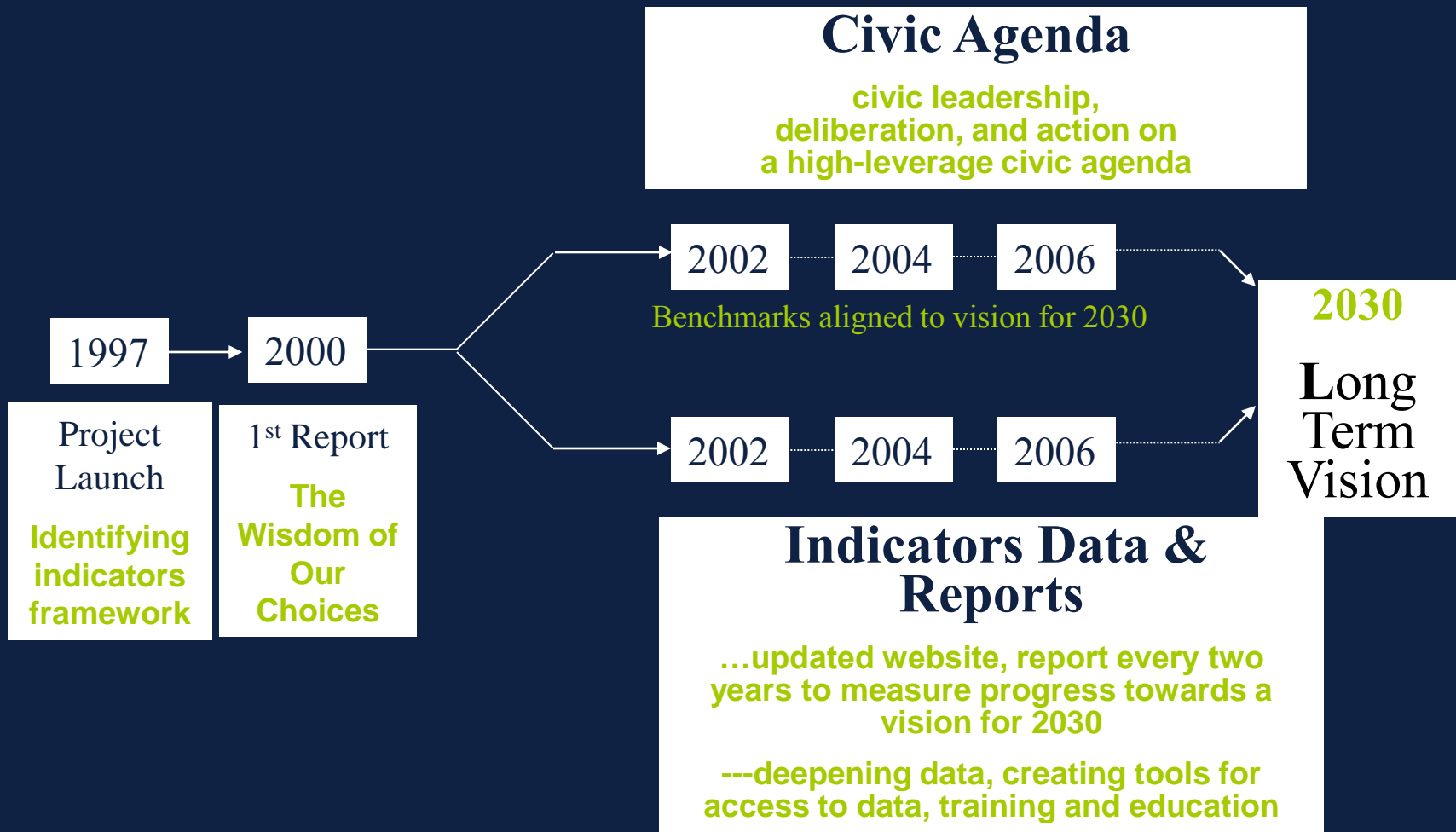
## ITS GOALS ARE TO:

1. Democratize access to data & information;
2. Foster informed public discourse;
3. Track progress on shared civic goals.



# The Project has a long time frame— through 2030—and two tracks:

- 1) Data
- 2) Civic Agenda



## The Wisdom of Our Choices

Boston's Indicators  
of Progress, Change  
and Sustainability  
2000



## Creativity and Innovation: *A Bridge to the Future*



A Summary of the  
Boston Indicators Report  
2002

## Thinking Globally/Acting Locally *A Regional Wake-Up Call*



A Summary of the  
Boston Indicators Report  
2002 – 2004

[www.bostonindicators.org](http://www.bostonindicators.org)

## A Time Like No Other: *Charting the Course of the Next Revolution*



A Summary of the  
Boston Indicators Report  
2004 – 2006

[www.bostonindicators.org](http://www.bostonindicators.org)

## A Great Reckoning: *Healing a Growing Divide*



A Summary of the  
Boston Indicators Report  
2009

[www.bostonindicators.org](http://www.bostonindicators.org)

# Boston's Education Pipeline: A Report Card

Boston's  
Education Pipeline  
A Report Card  
The Boston Indicators Project





# Lessons Learned the Hard Way

- 1. Good data and indicators are necessary but not sufficient.** The journey from data to impact can take longer than you think.
- 2. To foster critical thinking and real systems change, “both/and” works best:** geographically nested micro and macro data; qualitative and quantitative measures, sector-specific and cross-cutting categories; the engagement of community stakeholders and academic experts, civic leaders, policy makers.
- 3. Unpack indicators - Behind simple data snapshots lie long-term trends, comparisons and disparities– and complex truths:** Where feasible, show indicators over time, by race/ethnicity, by age, by household income and geographic comparisons.
- 4. A commitment to constructive change combined with analytical skills, data visualization tools and good data is POWERFUL.** But it’s not rocket science: You can do it!

# 1. Good data and indicators are necessary but not sufficient.

**Data**

**Indicators**

**Goals**

**Milestones**

**Analysis & Reports that “Tell a Story”**

**Strategies/Agenda**

**Alignment**

**Action**

**Impact**

## **2. A “Both/And Approach” Works Best**

**Create the flexibility and scope to  
make connections across  
disciplines, sectors, and  
geographies.**



# The Boston Indicators Project Framework: 10 Sectors...



 Civic Vitality



 Health



 Cultural Life  
& the Arts



 Housing



 Economy



 Public Safety



 Education



 Technology



 Environment  
& Energy



 Transportation

# ...and 6 “Cross-Cutting” Topics

**Boston  
Neighborhoods**



**Children & Youth**



**Competitive Edge**



**Fiscal Health**



**Sustainable  
Development**



**Race & Ethnicity**



# **Boston's indicators are registering the impact of global forces:**



**Population  
Growth**

**Technological  
transformation**

**Economic  
Globalization**

**Climate Change**

# **3. Behind data snapshots lie important trends, comparisons and disparities**

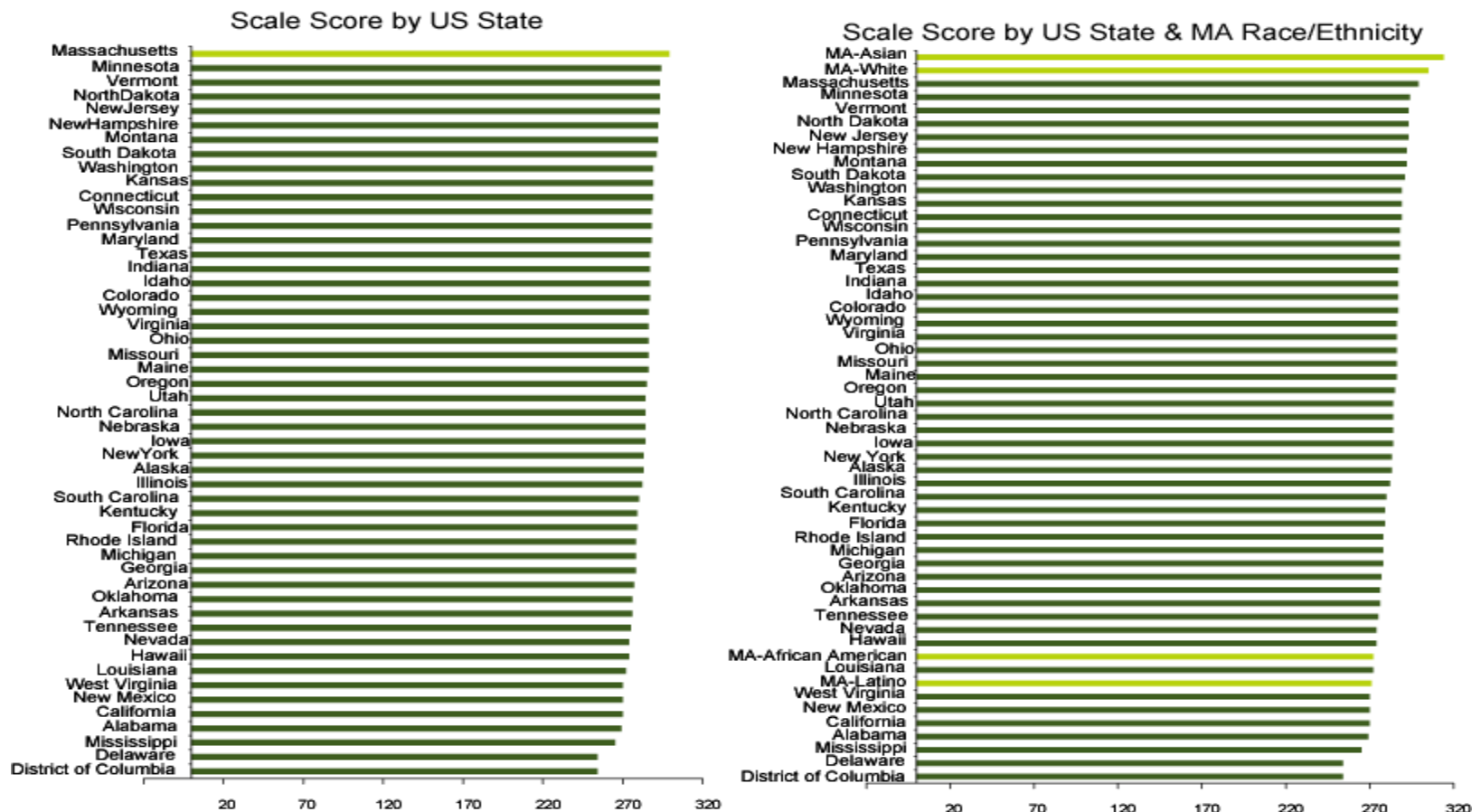
**Don't trade complexity for simplicity without understanding:**

**“Unpack” indicators**



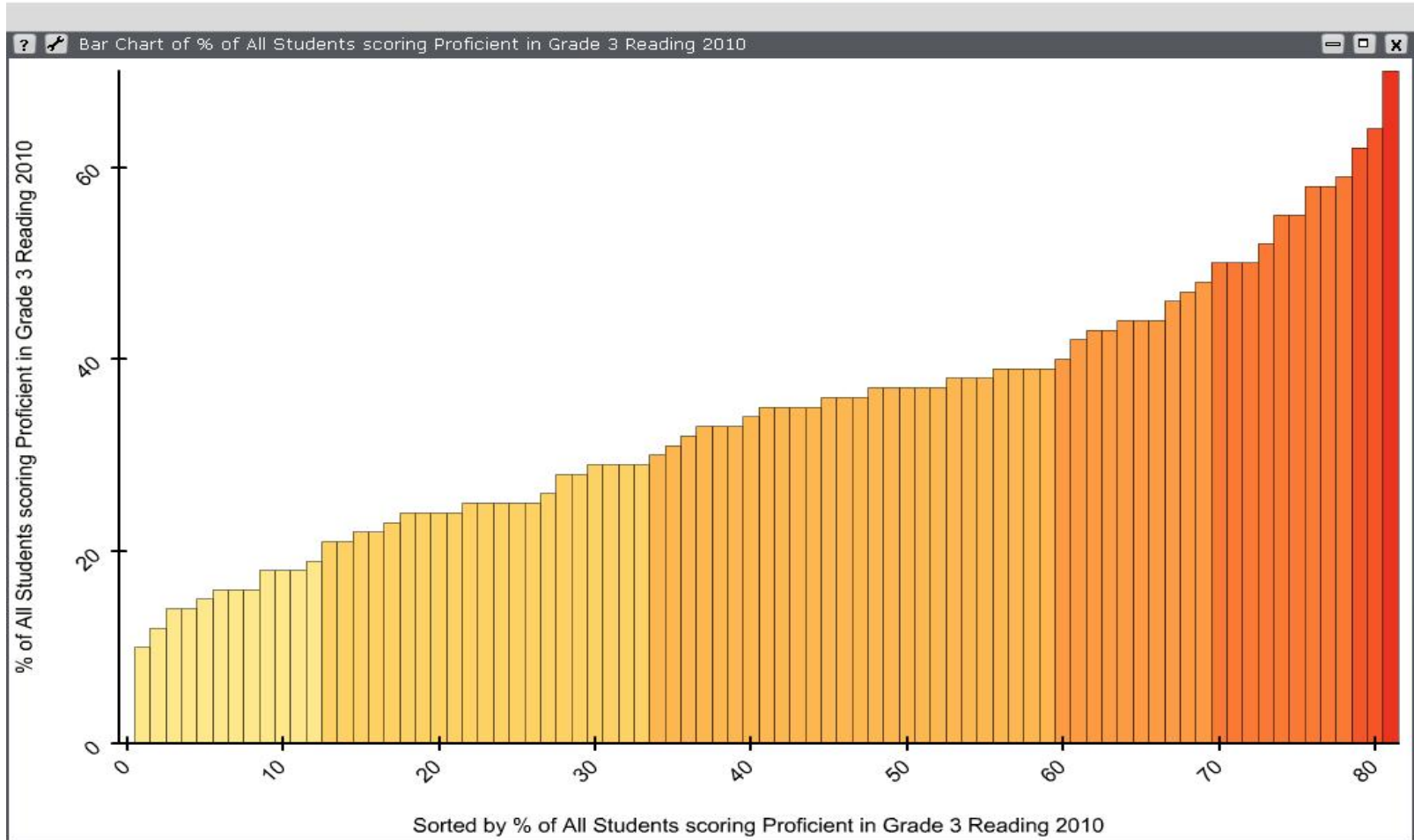
# “Massachusetts ranks #1 on NAEP in 8<sup>th</sup> grade math”: White and Asian students at the top, black & Latino students with Alabama and Louisiana

National Assessment of Educational Progress  
8th Grade Mathematics 2009



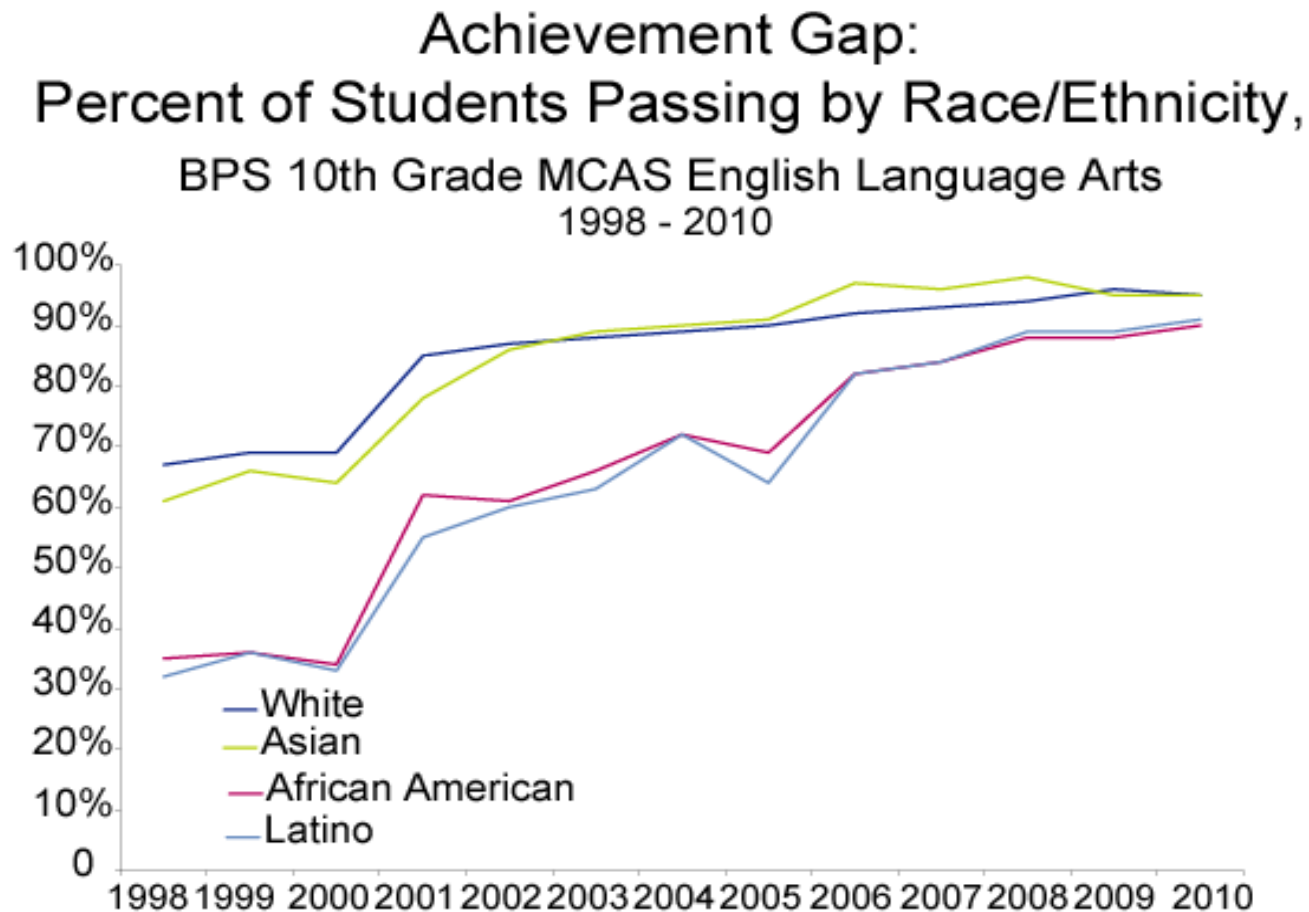
# 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading Proficiency Boston Public Schools 2010 – 37% (with a range from 10% to 70% by school)

Boston Indicators Project



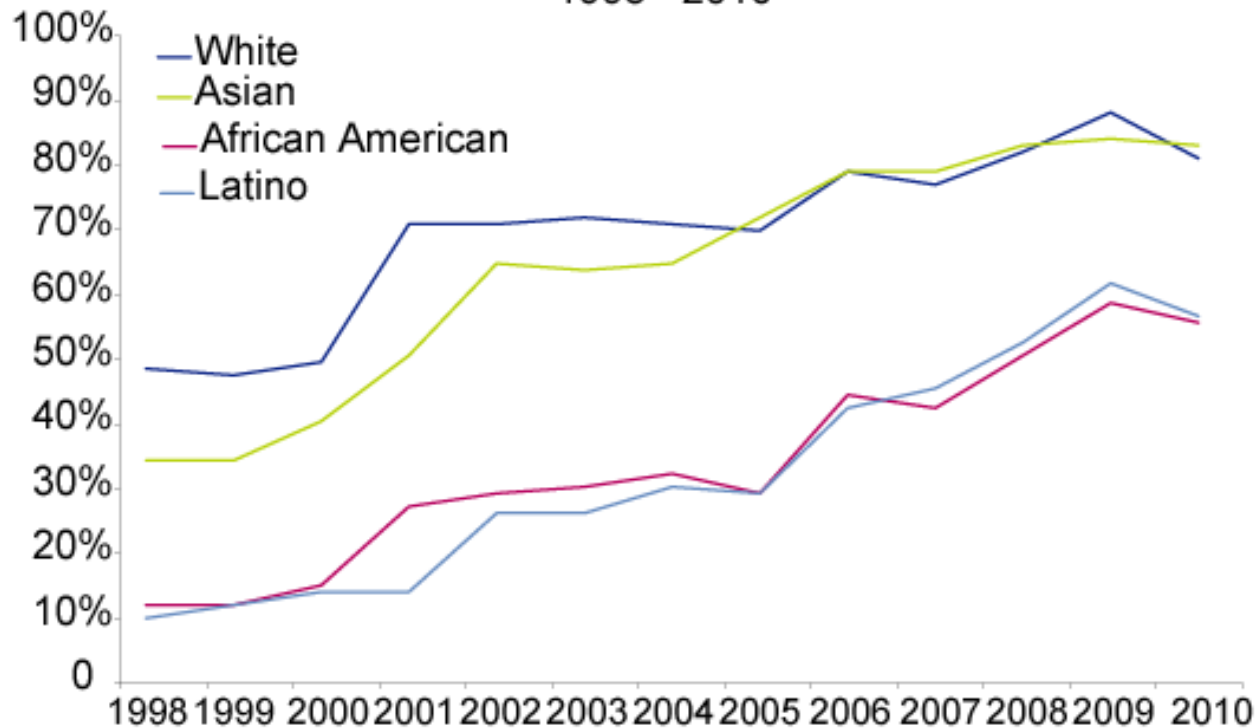


# Headline: “The BPS achievement gap in passing the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) has almost closed”



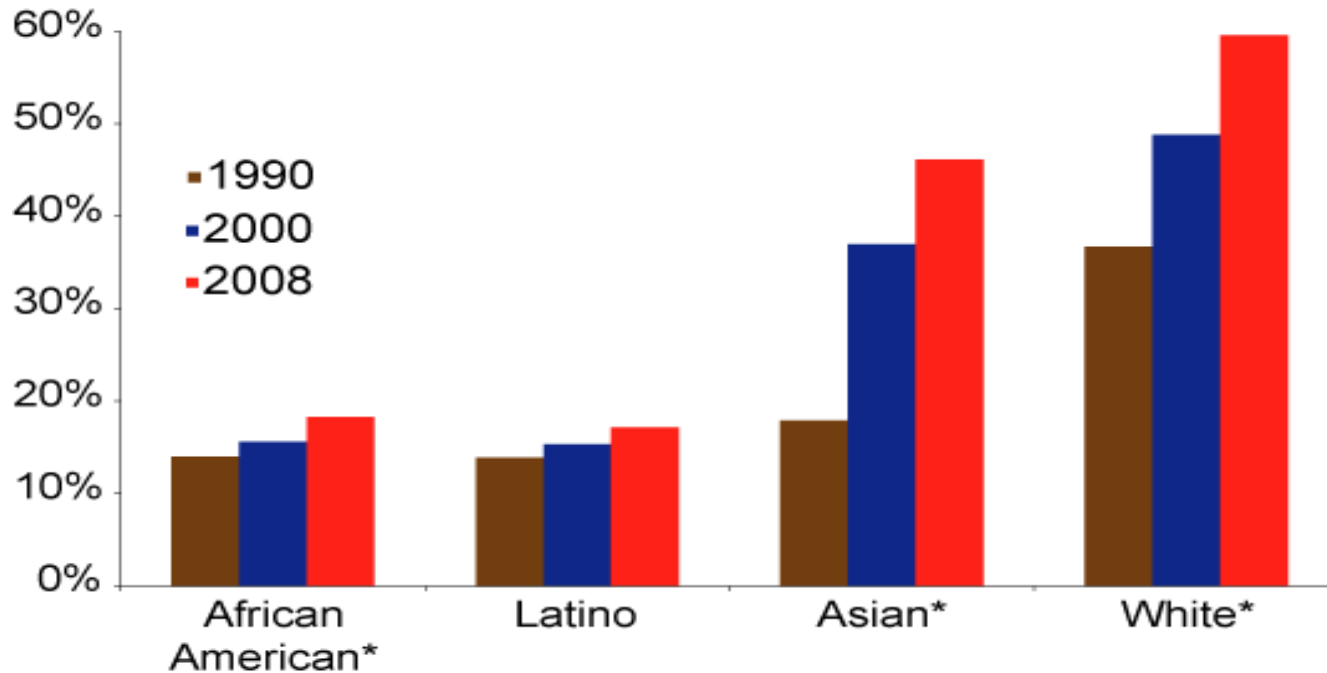
... but when Proficiency—or grade-level mastery—is used, a wide gap persists

Achievement Gap:  
Percent of Students Proficient/Advanced by Race/Ethnicity,  
BPS 10th Grade MCAS English Language Arts  
1998 - 2010



# “Boston has a highly educated workforce”: 1990 – 2008: Black & Latino adults with a BA in Boston increased slightly; whites & Asians dramatically

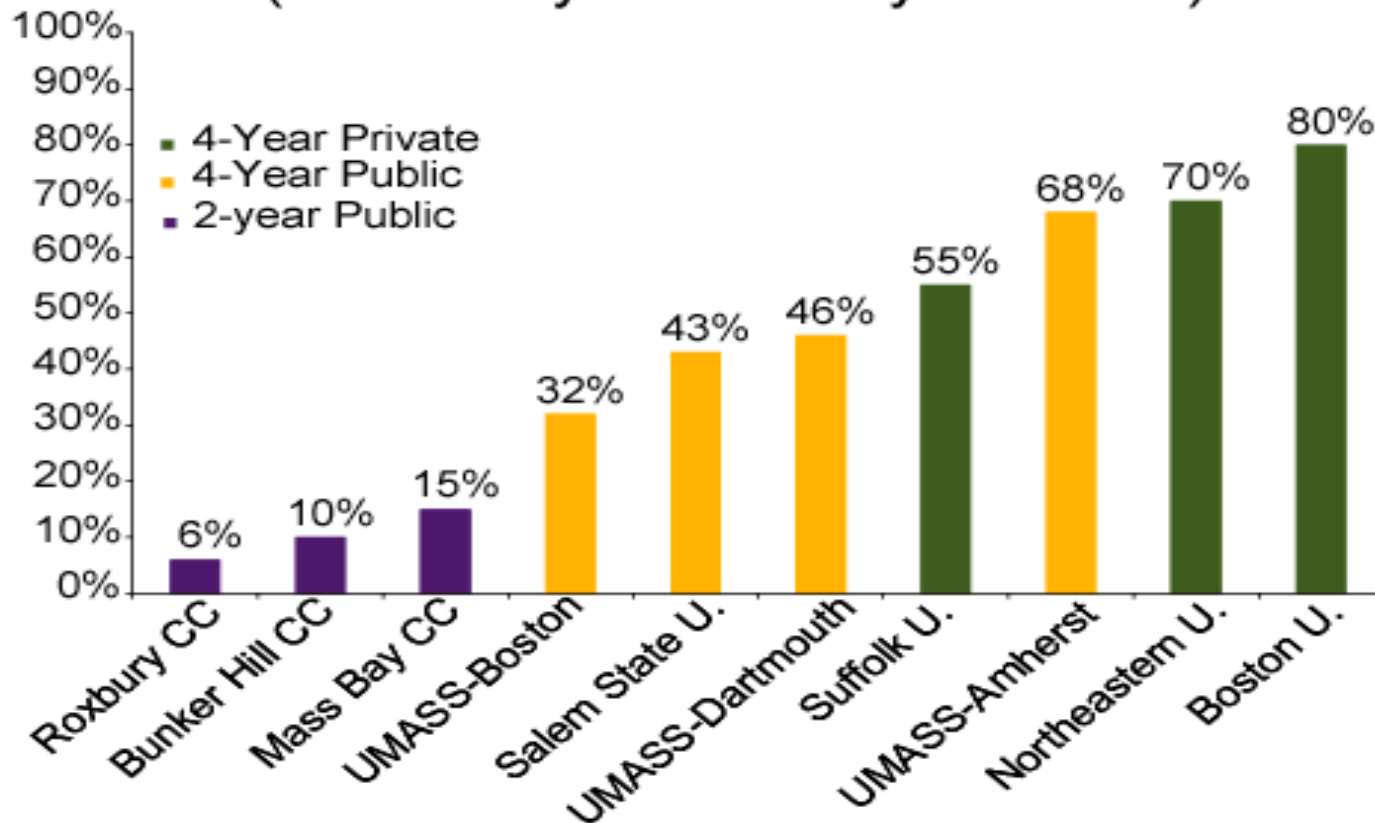
Percent of Adults with a  
Bachelor's Degree or Higher  
by Race/Ethnicity, Boston 1990-2008



Source: US Census Bureau Decennial Census,  
American Community Survey  
\*Not Latino/Hispanic

# Graduation rates at local colleges at which a high percentage of BPS grads enroll vary from 6% to 80%

College Graduation Rates for the Top Ten Institutions Attended by BPS Graduates, 2009  
(150%=6 year and 3 year rates)

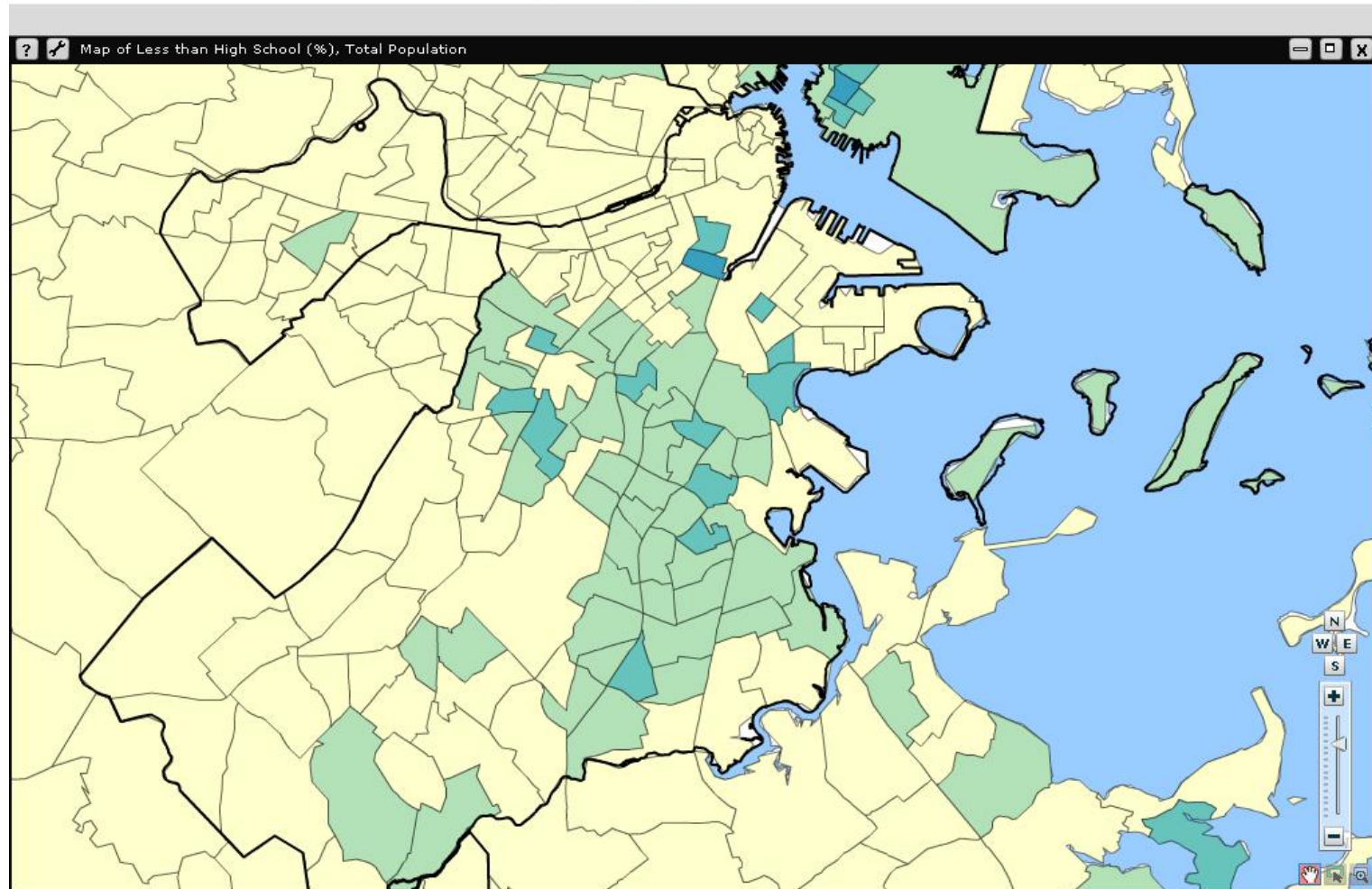


Source: NCES IPEDS

# Behind the Headline :

## Boston's Adults without a High School Diploma by Census Tract, 2005-2009

Open Indicators Weave

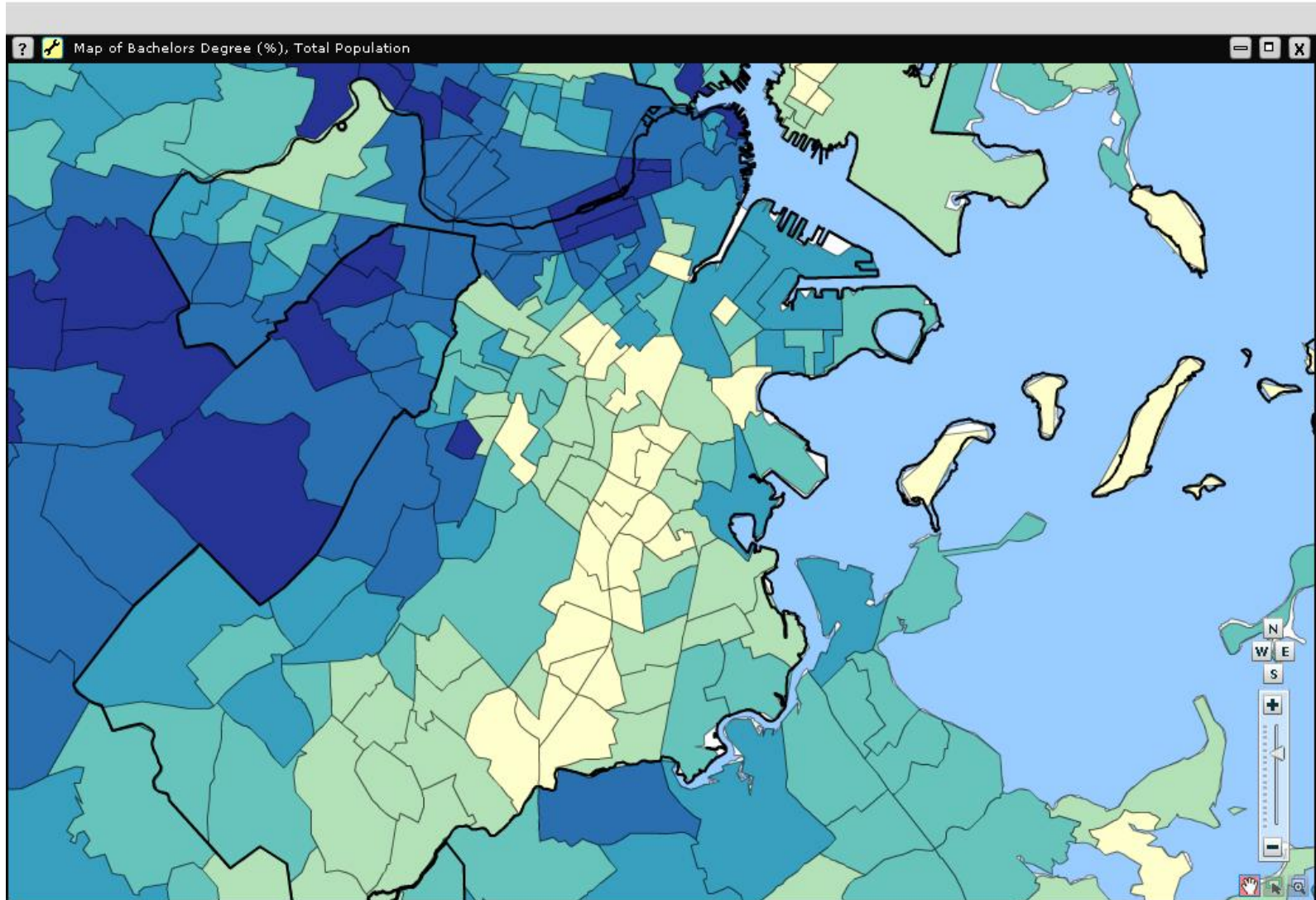




# Behind the Headline :

## Boston's Adults without a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Census Tract, 2005-2009

Open Indicators Weave

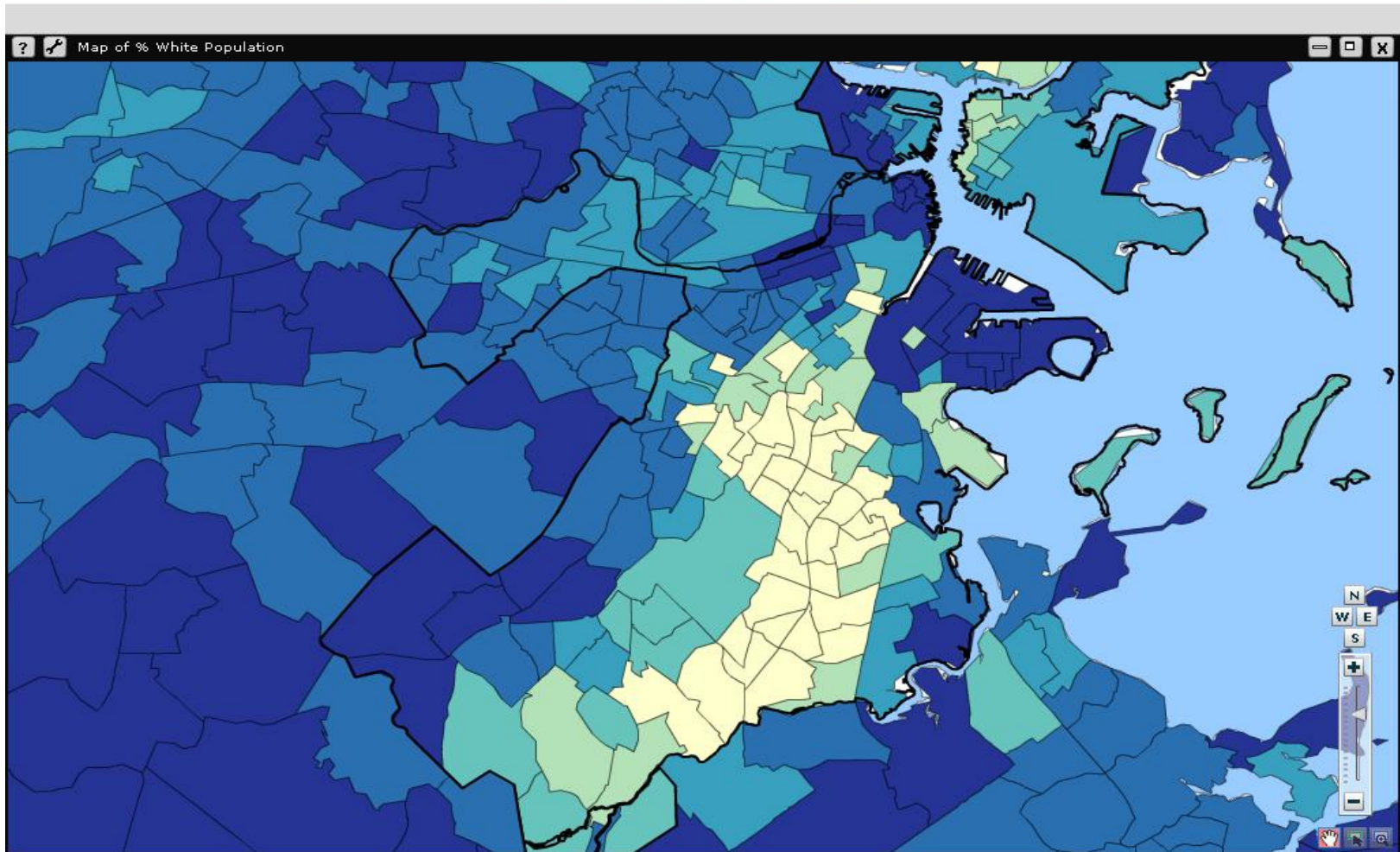




# Racial/Ethnic Concentration in Greater Boston: % White (blue); % People of Color (yellow)

By Census Tract, 2005-2009

Open Indicators Weave



# Headline: “Massachusetts, Greater Boston and Boston are outperforming the nation in unemployment rates”

## Massachusetts Monthly Total Non-Farm Employment,

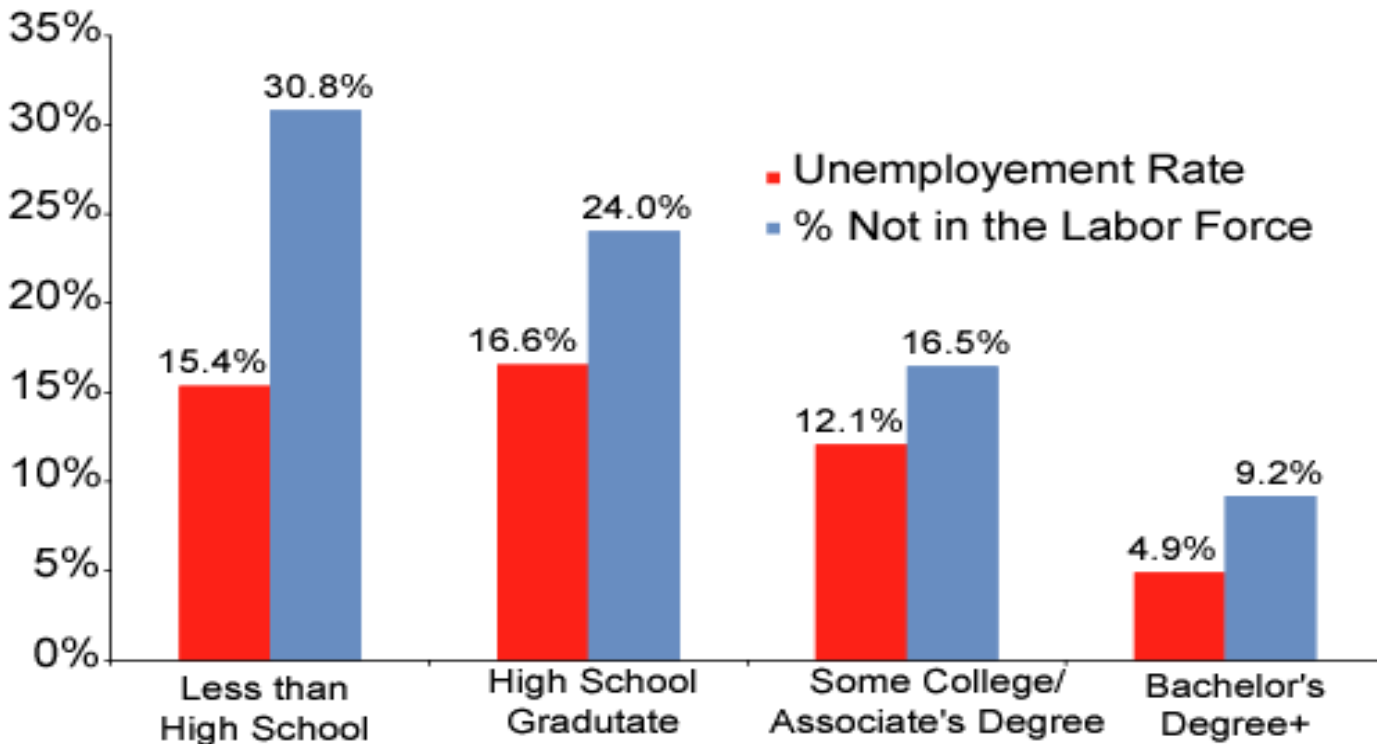
Seasonally Adjusted, Jan. 2000 - Nov. 2010



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Behind the Headline: Boston workforce participation rates by educational attainment

Unemployment Rate & Laborforce Participation  
by Educational Attainment  
Adults 25 - 64, Boston 2009



Source: American Community Survey  
2009 1-year estimates

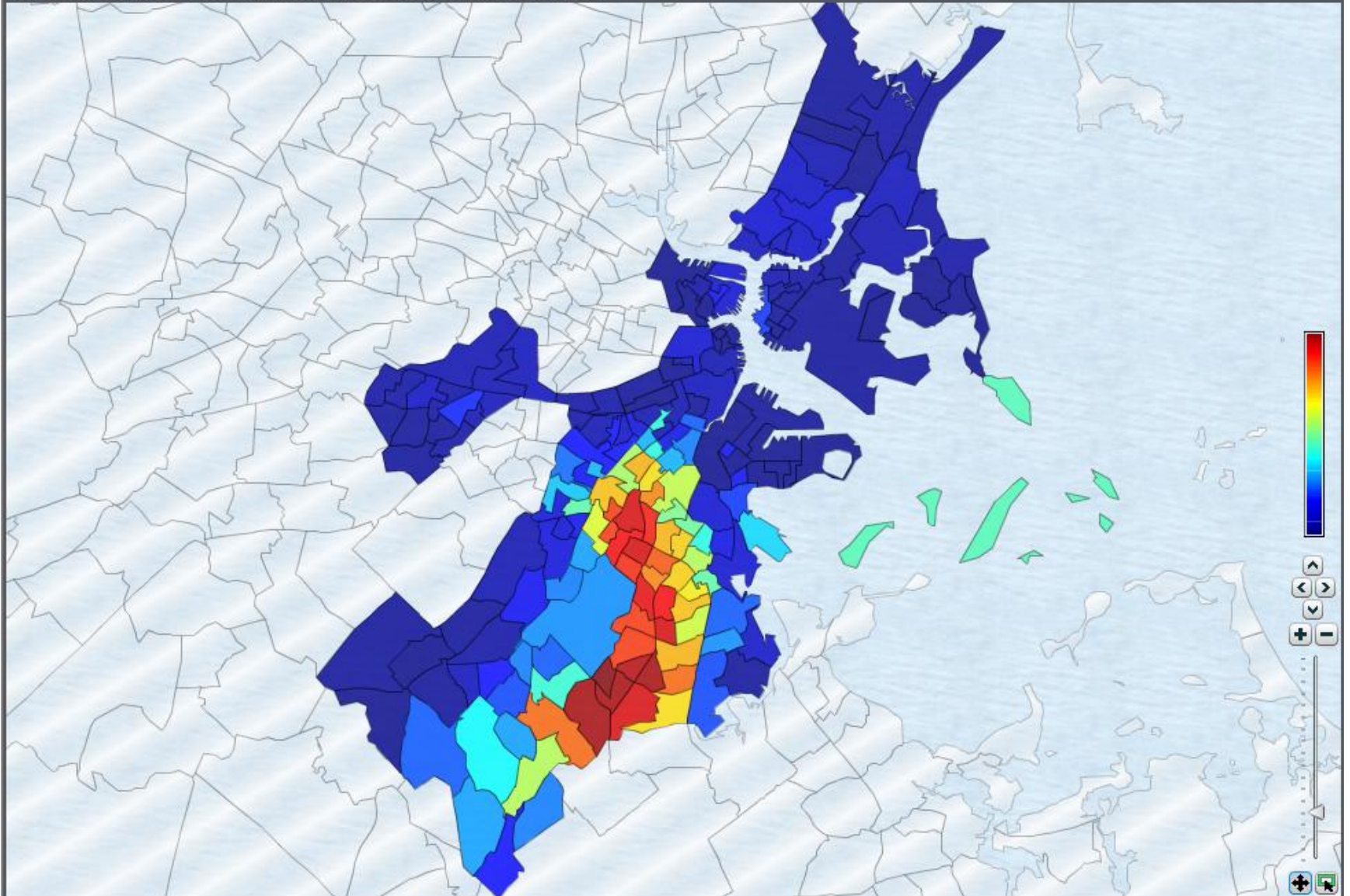
**4. A commitment to constructive change, combined with analytical skills, data visualization tools and good data, is POWERFUL.**

**But it's not rocket science.  
You can do it!**

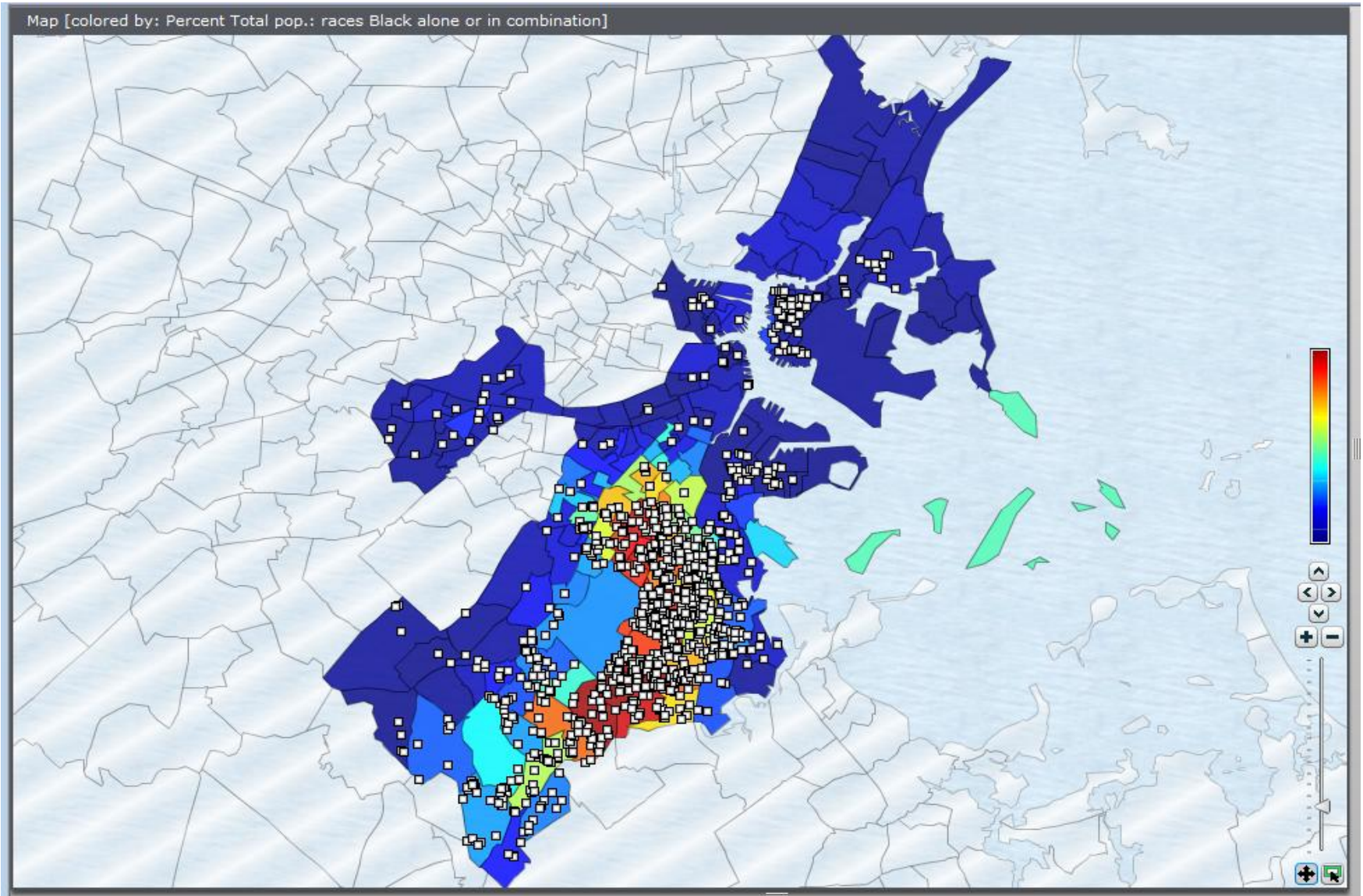


# Boston Census Tracts by Percent African American

Map [colored by: Percent Total pop.: races Black alone or in combination]

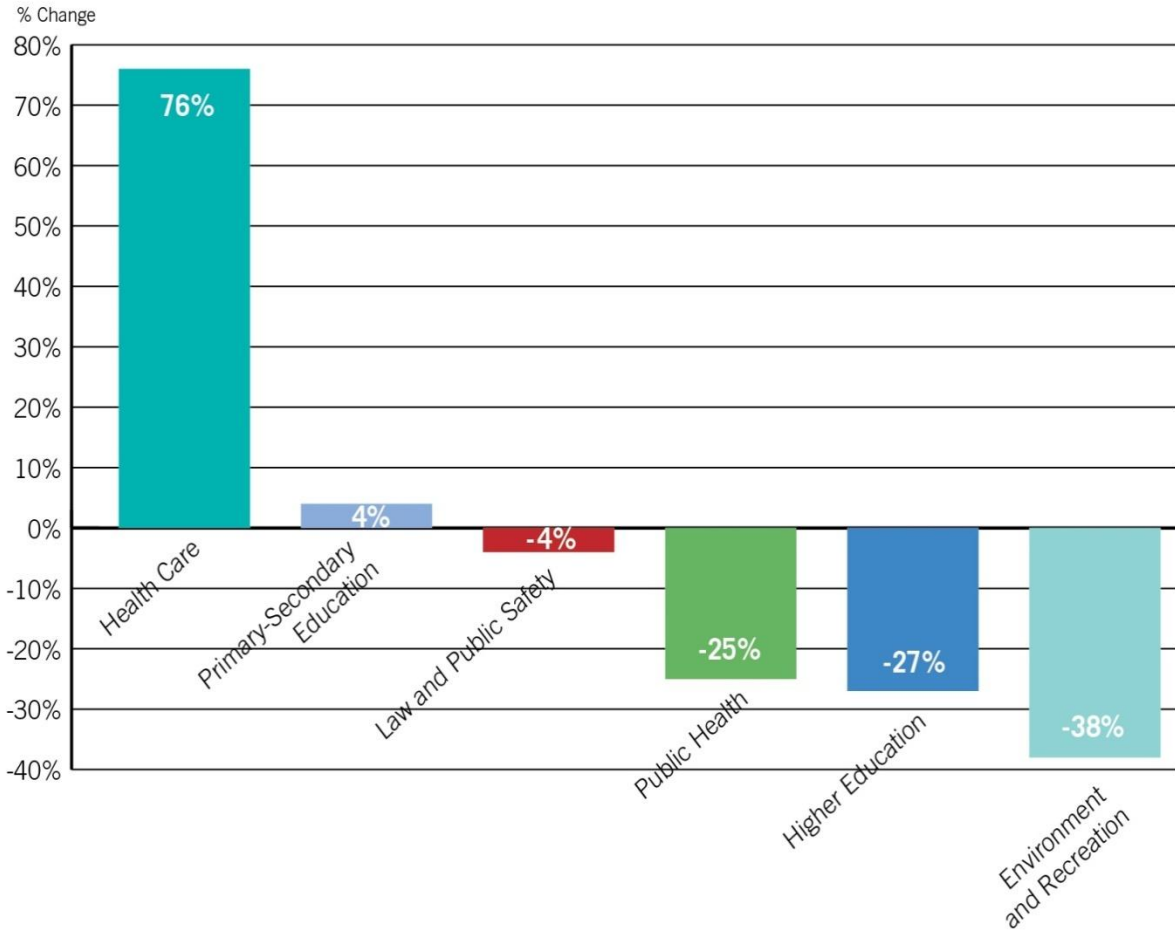


# Concentration of Housing Foreclosures



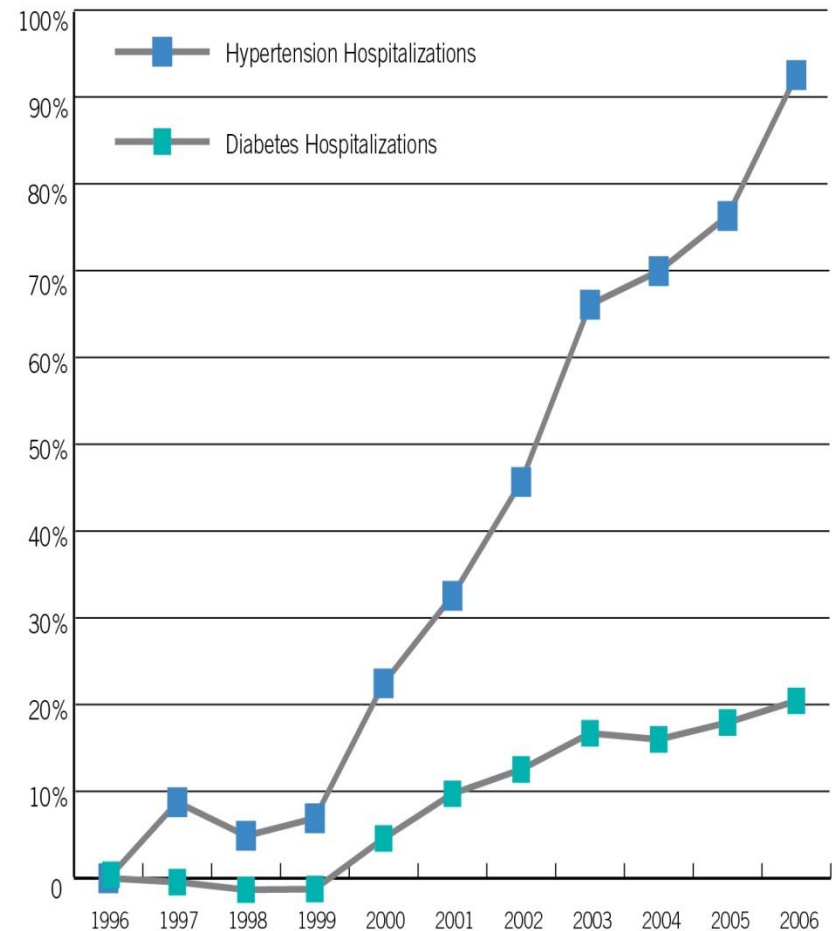
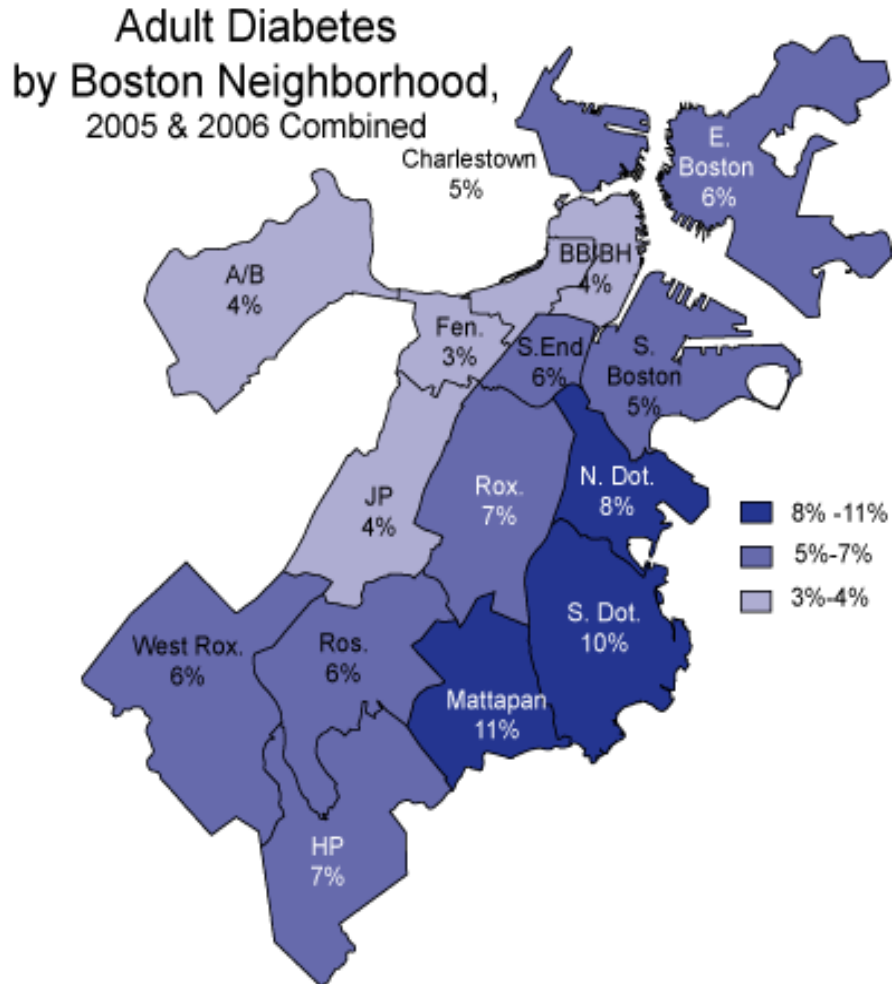


# State Budget FY'01 – '10: In MA – and the US, health care costs are crowding out investment in the basic determinants of health



Mass. State Budget

# In Boston, rising rates of obesity and hypertension are concentrated in low-income neighborhoods of color





# Healthy People / Healthy Economy

A Coalition to Make Massachusetts the National Leader in Health and Wellness

## A coalition to make Massachusetts the national leader in health and wellness



Healthy People in a Healthy Economy

# Greater Boston's Emerging Civic Agenda

**World-Class  
Human  
Capital**



**21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Jobs &  
Economic  
Strategies**

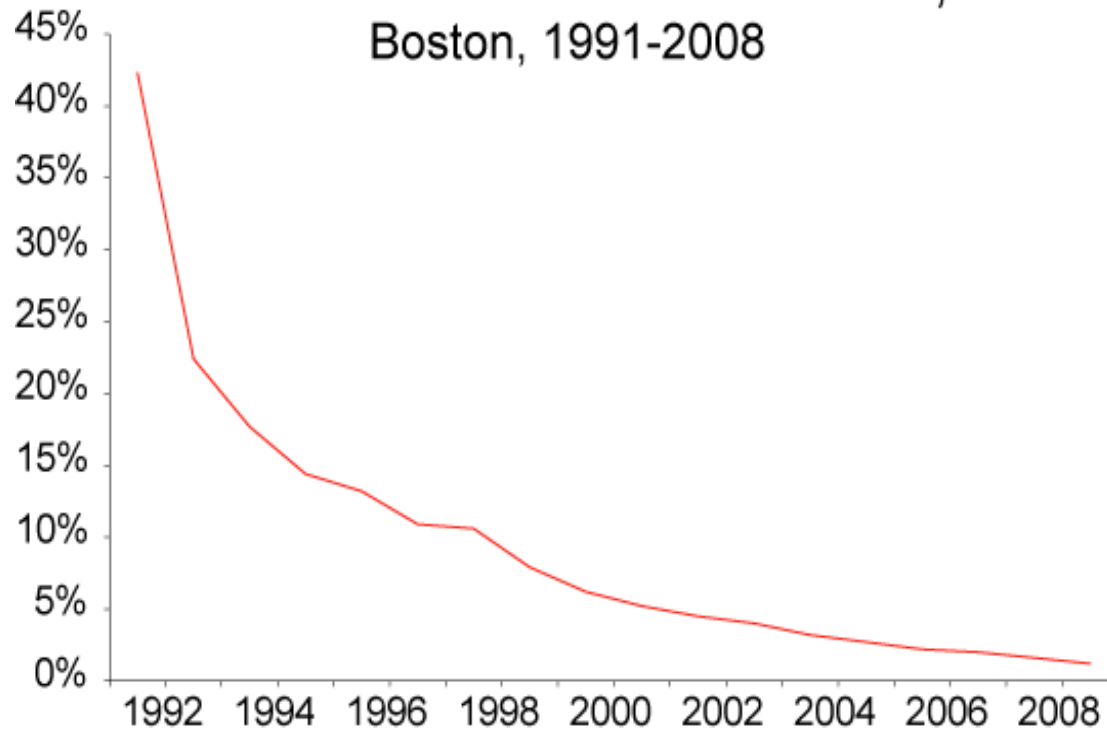
**21<sup>st</sup>  
Century  
Infrastructure**



**An Open  
Effective,  
Dynamic  
Civic  
Culture**

# A BENT CURVE...

Percent of Children Screened with Elevated Blood Lead Levels, Boston, 1991-2008



Source: Boston Public Health Commission

# The Open Indicators Consortium



*Weave*

**open source  
data visualization**



Thank you.



# The Open Indicators Consortium



## *Weave*

*open source data visualization*

developed by students and faculty at

The University of Massachusetts Lowell

in partnership with Consortium members:

Arizona State University; Atlanta's Neighborhood Nexus; Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning; Columbus/Central OH Community Research Partners; CT Data Collaborative. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Boston Indicators Project, MA Dept of Early Education & Care; RI Dept. of Education, The Providence Plan; Kansas City MI (MARC); Michigan Data Collaborative - Grand Rapids, Detroit; King County WA Public Health Department; South Florida Planning Council; Portland OR State University

**Arizona (Arizona State University)**

**Metro Atlanta/Atlanta GA** (Neighborhood Nexus Partnership)

**Metro Boston/Boston MA** (Metropolitan Area Planning Council and the Boston Indicators Project at the Boston Foundation and the Massachusetts DEartment of Early Education and Care)

**Metro Chicago IL** (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning)

**Columbus/Central OH** (Community Research Partners, MORPC)

**Connecticut Data Collaborative** (with New Haven and Hartford)

**Kansas City MI** (MARC)

**Michigan Data Collaborative** (Grand Valley University, Grand Rapids / Detroit)

**Rhode Island** (Rhode Island Department of Education, the Providence Plan)

**King County/Seattle WA Public Health Department**

**South Florida Planning Council FLA** (including Miami)

**Portland OR (Portland State University)**