

The Census 2020 Low Response Score (LRS) and Westfield, Massachusetts

Westfield Population Characteristics

Westfield's population characteristics, for the most part, put the city at a low risk for undercount in the upcoming Census. According to the latest ACS estimates, Westfield's population includes:

- A lower than average proportion of renters versus homeowners, at 31.4% compared to the 37.6% state average.
- A slightly above average percentage of single mothers, at 12.9% compared to 12.3% statewide.
- Hispanic population below the state average, at 8.3% in Westfield compared to 11.2% in Massachusetts.
- Limited English ability in Westfield is not prevalent with only 5.0% speaking English "less than very well" vs. 9.1% statewide.
- The youth cohort could prove to be a challenging demographic, at 21.2% compared to an average of 14.0% in Massachusetts.

Key Response Characteristics for Westfield and Massachusetts Average

Key Demographics	Massachusetts	Westfield
Ages 15-24	14.0%	21.2%
Hispanic	11.2%	8.3%
Female householder, no husband present, family	12.3%	12.9%
Vacant housing units	9.7%	6.0%
Poverty level, all people, w/in past 12 months	11.1%	8.5%
Renter-occupied	37.6%	31.4%
Owner-occupied	62.4%	68.6%
Foreign-born	16.2%	9.0%
Speak English less than "very well"*	9.1%	5.0%
*Languages spoken other than English		
Spanish	8.8%	3.8%
Speak English less than "very well"	3.6%	0.9%
Other Indo-European languages	8.8%	8.7%
Speak English less than "very well"	3.1%	3.8%

UMass Donahue Institute. Source: 2017 ACS 5-year estimates Tables DP02, DP03, DP04, DP05 and 2015 ACS 5-year estimates Table B16001. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

The Low Response Score

In preparation for the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau has developed a new hard-to-survey metric called the *Low Response Score (LRS)*. This score identifies block groups and tracts whose characteristics predict low census mail return rate and are highly correlated (negatively) with census and survey participation. To calculate this score, the Bureau uses 2010-2014 American Community Survey data and looks at variables including housing, demographic, and socioeconomic, together with census operational data, including the 2010 Census Mail Return Rate for each block group and tract.

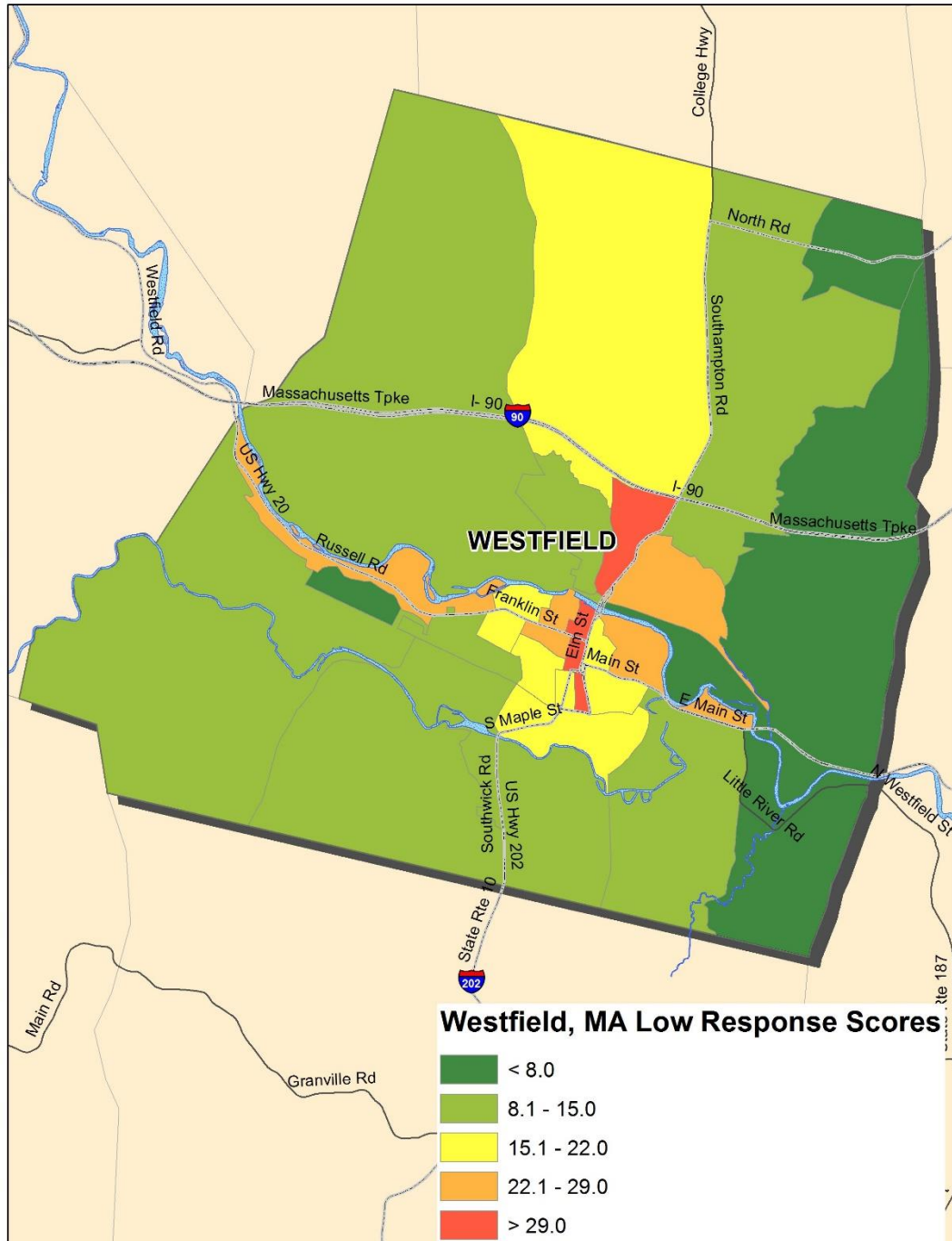
The LRS can be interpreted as the percentage of households predicted to NOT self-respond to the Decennial Census; the higher the LRS is in a census tract, the harder that area may be to survey. So, for example, if LRS=25, Census estimates that 25% of households in that tract will not self-respond to the Census. As a general rule of thumb, areas with a LRS of over 29 are considered the hardest to count in the upcoming Census.

Factors that increase a geography's Low Response Score include high percentages of:

- vacant units
- Hispanic population
- % of single female head-of-households
- households at or below the poverty level
- college-aged population (18-24 years)
- renters versus homeowners

Low Response Score Map, Westfield

- Of all 4,889 Census block groups with LRS numbers in Massachusetts, the average LRS is 18.
- Of 26 block groups with LRS numbers in Westfield, the average LRS is 16, and ranges from 5 to 36 in the hardest-to-count Census block group. Five block groups in Westfield have LRS scores of 20 or above.



Source: UMass Donahue Institute using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 Planning Database. The 2018 Planning Database uses 2010 Census data and 2012-2016 American Community Survey Data.