# Measuring Health Equity Progress in MA:
## *Towards Shared Goals and Coordinated Action*

Health Equity Compact

Massachusetts has a proud legacy of health reform. Still, today, our ZIP code, income, and identity shape how long and how well we live. Closing these gaps will require coordinated action across sectors, grounded in shared goals, accountability, and reliable data to measure progress and guide investment. This work is increasingly urgent as federal policy changes threaten health coverage and the disparities data needed to track inequities and hold systems accountable.

## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR COORDINATED ACTION

The Health Equity Compact calls for establishing bold, measurable health equity goals, which will lead to longer, healthier lives and shared economic prosperity in Massachusetts. To lay the foundation for this work, the Health Equity Compact is collaborating with state agencies and partners to:

- **Identify priority health conditions and structural drivers of health**
- **Identify key measures to track statewide progress, including available data sources** (see next page for draft measures)

This work seeks to align with existing efforts, including Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts (AHEM) and Boston's Live Long and Well Agenda. In this way, we can develop a more coordinated approach to measuring progress toward eliminating racial, ethnic, and geographic inequities.

## PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING AND ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY

| OVERARCHING GOALS | |
|---|---|
| **Save lives** by reducing premature deaths | **Advance shared economic prosperity** by reducing economic cost of health inequities |

| PRIORITY HEALTH CONDITIONS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heart health & diabetes | Maternal & perinatal health | Mental health & substance use | Cancer |

| STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Access to care | Healthcare affordability | Housing instability | Food insecurity |

**Full implementation will require measurable goals, clear accountability, coordinated action, and sustained investment in tracking and evaluation.**

## ADVANCING STATEWIDE GOALS: YOUR ROLE

### Drive Policy Change
**Ask your legislators to support** *An Act to Advance Health Equity* to advance statewide goals and accountability.

### Speak Up
**Use public forums, media, and organizational platforms** to reinforce the need for shared goals and metrics.

### Align Action
**Align organizational priorities, investments, and partnerships** with shared priority areas and measures.

### Build Accountability
**Advocate or partner to ensure resources** for state health equity data capacity and public reporting.

June 2026

# Measuring Health Equity Progress in MA:
## *Building a Shared Baseline*

Health Equity Compact

Communities of color are vital to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of Massachusetts. Yet decades of disinvestment and discriminatory policy have created barriers to living long, healthy lives. The following data offer a **snapshot of where action is needed**, and where statewide goals and accountability can drive change.

## OVERARCHING GOALS: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

### SAVING LIVES

**Premature death rate**
**1.5x higher**
**in AHEM communities than in other areas[1]**

*Advancing Health Equity in MA (AHEM) communities are those most affected by long-standing health inequities*

### ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Annual cost of health inequities in MA
**$5.9B**
**TODAY**

→

Without action to reduce health inequities
**$11.2B**
**BY 2050[2]**

*Economic impact due to premature deaths, avoidable health care spending, and lost labor productivity*

## PRIORITY HEALTH CONDITIONS

### Heart health & diabetes

**77% higher premature death rate due to heart health & diabetes conditions** for Black residents than White residents[3]

### Maternal & perinatal health

**2.7x higher severe maternal morbidity rate** for Black residents and 1.6x higher for Hispanic residents compared to White residents[4]

### Mental health & substance use

**86% higher rate of opioid-related overdose death** for Black residents than White residents, doubling from 2019 to 2023[5]

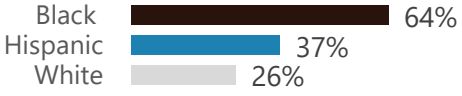
### Cancer

**11% higher premature death rate due to cancer** for Black residents than White residents[3]

## STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

### Access to care

Most recent **ED visit was avoidable** if they'd had timely access to primary care[6]




Hispanic residents experienced a 3.7x higher rate of having **any member of their family uninsured** over the last 12 months compared to White residents.[6]

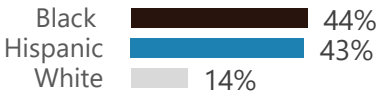
### Healthcare affordability

**Any difficulties affording healthcare**[6]

**Brazilian, Mexican, Haitian, and American Indian** adults experience healthcare affordability issues at ~1.5x the state average.[7]

### Social drivers of health

Experiencing **housing instability**[8]




Household **food insecurity**[9]

Building systems that support the health and wellbeing of communities most impacted by inequities will save lives and advance prosperity across Massachusetts. By holding ourselves accountable for measurable progress towards statewide, health equity goals, **we can build a healthier future for everyone.**

**Sources & Data Year**

1. MA Dept. of Public Health (DPH) (2018-2023) 2. Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA Foundation Report (2016-2019) 3. MA DPH (2021)
4. Betsy Lehman Center (2024) 5. MA DPH (2023) 6. Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) MA Health Insurance Survey (2025)
7. MA DPH Community Health Equity Survey (2023) 8. CHIA Report (2023) 9. Greater Boston Food Bank Report (2025)

# Measuring Health Equity Progress in MA:
*Referenced Data Sources*

Health Equity Compact

| Domain | Metric | Data Source | Data Year |
|---|---|---|---|
| **OVERARCHING GOALS** | | | |
| **Premature Deaths** | Premature death rate in AHEM compared to non-AHEM cities/towns | 1. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) – Unpublished analysis | 2018-2023 |
| **Economic Cost** | Annual and projected cost of health inequities in Massachusetts | 2. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation — The Time is Now: The $5.9 Billion Case for Health Equity Reform | 2016-2019 |
| **PRIORITY HEALTH CONDITIONS** | | | |
| **Heart Health & Diabetes** | Premature death rate due to heart health and diabetes conditions, by race/ethnicity | 3. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) — Deaths of Massachusetts Residents | 2021 |
| **Maternal & Perinatal Health** | Severe maternal morbidity rate, by race/ethnicity | 4. Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety — Severe Maternal Morbidity Data | 2024 |
| **Mental Health & Substance Use Disorder** | Premature death rate due to opioid-related overdose, by race/ethnicity | 5. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) — Opioid Related Overdose Deaths — Demographic Data Highlights | 2023 |
| **Cancer** | Premature death rate due to cancer, by race/ethnicity | 3. Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) — Deaths of Massachusetts Residents | 2021 |
| **STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH** | | | |
| **Access to Care** | Most recent ED visit in past 12 months was for a non-emergency [due to inability to obtain a timely visit with a general doctor], by race/ethnicity | 6. MA Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) — 2025 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey | 2025 |
| | Any uninsurance in family over the past 12 months, by race/ethnicity | 6. MA Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) — 2025 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey | 2025 |
| **Healthcare Affordability** | Any healthcare affordability issue for Massachusetts residents and their families, by race/ethnicity | 6. MA Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) — 2025 Massachusetts Health Insurance Survey | 2025 |
| | Trouble paying for healthcare, by specific ethnicity | 7. MA DPH Community Health Equity Initiative Data Dashboard — Adult Community Health Equity Survey | 2023 |
| **Social Drivers of Health** | Housing instability, by race/ethnicity | 8. MA Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) — 2025 Research Brief on Unmet Health-Related Social Needs | 2023 |
| | Households experiencing food insecurity, by race/ethnicity | 9. Greater Boston Food Bank — 2026 Massachusetts Food Access Report | 2025 |

Note: CHIA's Health Care Equity Dashboard and Primary Care Dashboard feature several of the above metrics.