

Environmental Justice Screening Form

Project Name	Access Road Improvement Project
Anticipated Date of MEPA Filing	Expanded Environmental Notification (EENF) Form will be filed by April 15, 2023
Proponent Name	New England Power Company (NEP)
Contact Information (e.g., consultant)	Dan Herzlinger, TRC Companies, Inc. 6 Ashley Drive, 1 st Floor Scarborough, ME 04074 978-935-8065
Public website for project or other physical location where project materials can be obtained (if available)	www. centralmassreliability.com
Municipality and Zip Code for Project (if known)	Ayer (01432), Shirley (01464), Lancaster (01523), Sterling (01564), West Boylston (01583), Boylston (01505), Shrewsbury (01545), Worcester (01608), Grafton (01519) and Millbury (01527)
Project Type* (list all that apply)	Energy Transmission - Access Road Improvements within Existing Rights of Way
Is the project site within a mapped 100-year FEMA flood plain? Y/N/unknown	Yes, in short segments of Rights-of-Way scattered along the project length
Estimated GHG emissions of conditioned spaces (click here for GHG Estimation tool)	Not applicable – No buildings are proposed as part of this project.

Project Description

1. Provide a brief project description, including overall size of the project site and square footage of proposed buildings and structures if known.

New England Power Company (NEP) is proposing to perform access road improvements within existing rights-of-way (ROW) to serve access needs for several transmission lines in central Massachusetts. The ROW is shared by ten (10) transmission lines of various voltages (345 kV, 115 kV, and 69 kV) though not all of the transmission lines traverse the full length of the ROW. The ROW is approximately 35.7 miles and runs generally in a southwest to northeast direction between Cross Street in Millbury to Westford Road in Ayer.

In addition to providing long-term, safe and reliable access, the access road improvements will be utilized to immediately support three separate NEP maintenance projects within this ROW which are: Line P142/O141 Flyover Switch Project which involves the installation of switch structures, Line P142/O141 Asset Condition Refurbishment (ACR) Project which involves replacing structures and Optical Ground Wire (OPGW), and Line 313/343 ACR Project which involves replacing structures and installing OPGW in two phases.

Upgrades to existing access roads and the construction of new and permanent work pads will be

necessary and will occur within the existing utility ROW in order to provide safe and reliable access. NEP is proposing to perform these improvements at one time in order to provide cost efficiencies to our customers, reduce abutter disruption and minimize regulatory and administrative burden. NEP will include the impacts from the three maintenance projects in the EENF. No significant tree clearing, or expansion of the ROW is proposed as part of this project.

2. List anticipated MEPA review thresholds (301 CMR 11.03) (if known)

The transmission line work on the projects is exempt under the Wetlands Protection Act and MEPA for utility maintenance and replacement. However, the upgrades to existing access roads and construction of new and permanent work pads is not exempt.

ENF and Other Review:

- 301 CMR 11.03(1)(b)(1) – Direct alteration of 25 or more acres of land, unless the Project is consistent with an approved conservation farm plan or forest cutting plan or other similar generally accepted agricultural or forestry practices.
- 301 CMR 11.03(2)(b)(2) – Greater than two acres of disturbance of designated priority habitat, as defined in 321 CMR 10.02, that results in a take of a state-listed endangered or threatened species or species of special concern
- 301 CMR 11.03(11)(b) – Any Project of ½ or more acres within a designated ACEC, unless the Project consists solely of one single family dwelling.

3. List all anticipated state, local and federal permits needed for the project (if known)

Agency	Permit, Review, or Approval
Federal	
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)	Section 404 Pre-Construction Notification Permit and consultations under Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act and Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Stormwater Discharges and Construction Dewatering Activities/Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
State	
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)	MEPA Review/Certificate of the Secretary
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)	Section 401 Comprehensive Water Quality Certificate
Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	Construction Access Permit
Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)	Conservation Management Permit
Local	
Conservation Commissions in Ayer, Shirley, Lancaster, Sterling, West Boylston, Boylston, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Grafton and Millbury.	Order of Conditions per the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (MA WPA)

4. Identify EJ populations and characteristics (Minority, Income, English Isolation) within 5 miles of project site (can attach map identifying 5-mile radius from [EJ Maps Viewer](#) in lieu of narrative)

See **Attachment A**

5. Identify any municipality or census tract meeting the definition of “vulnerable health EJ criteria” in the [DPH EJ Tool](#) located in whole or in part within a 1 mile radius of the project site

See **Attachment B.**

6. Identify potential short-term and long-term environmental and public health impacts that may affect EJ Populations and any anticipated mitigation

The EJ Populations within 1-mile radius of the ROW (the Designated Geographic Area for the Project) are shown in **Attachment C**.

Potential environmental and public health impacts of the Project and anticipated mitigation include the following:

Water Quality:

The project will incorporate protective and preventative measures to minimize and avoid impacts to water quality. The ROW crosses many wetland areas, streams, and rivers including the Wachusett Reservoir which serves as a public water supply to the surrounding areas. To protect water quality and these sensitive areas, temporary roads will be constructed using construction mats. Construction mats are typically comprised of wooden beams, bolted together, and are typically 4 ft wide by 16 ft long. They are laid temporarily on top of the ground and vegetation. These mats allow heavy machines and vehicles to cross sensitive areas without damaging the soil or roots of vegetation and are also placed in a manner that do not affect the flow of water in streams. These mats will be removed when construction is completed, and the wetlands will be restored. In addition, Best Management Practices, such as the use of straw wattles, silt fencing, stormwater management features, and other control measures will be used to prevent soil and other material from being transported into wetlands and streams. Using these Best Management Practices, any impacts to water quality will be negligible and temporary and are not anticipated to cause impacts to public health.

Land Protection and Open Space:

The Project passes through protected land and open space areas around the Wachusett Reservoir that are maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Since Project activities will be limited to the existing ROW, access to Protected Land and Open Space within EJ Populations will not be impacted.

Noise:

The EJ communities that are most likely to have temporary noise impacts are the communities that are directly within or are located near the ROW. Noise impacts associated with construction-period activities are temporary in nature and expected to be minimal as work progresses along the transmission lines. Where construction will occur adjacent to residences, NEP will notify landowners prior to the commencement of work. Noise-generating activities will be conducted in accordance with any local and state requirements and are not anticipated to cause impacts to public health.

Traffic:

Impacts to traffic during the construction of the project will be minor and intermittent. The work areas will be accessed primarily from NEP-fee owned or NEP easement off town roadways. NEP will obtain the necessary permits from MassDOT for access. Once on-site, vehicle traffic will be limited to within or in proximity to the ROW. Since the ROW is an un-manned facility, there will be no permanent impacts to traffic patterns or use of existing roadways and no impacts to public health are anticipated from traffic.

7. Identify project benefits, including “Environmental Benefits” as defined in 301 CMR 11.02, that may improve environmental conditions or public health of the EJ population

Potential “Environmental Benefits” include the following:

- Increased resiliency of the overall bulk transmission line system. By installing improved foundations, new switch structures and upgraded replacement structures, this infrastructure will be better suited to withstand strong winds and storm events, as a result of climate change.
- The installation of OPGW will allow better communication between substations, resulting in improved response time during storm-related emergencies and outages, which will increase public safety.

Other benefits of this project that are not expressly included under the definition of “Environmental Benefits” consist of the following:

- Reduce overall disturbance to adjacent landowners, wetland resource areas, and rare species habitat over time by planning for the future and reducing the likelihood of multiple repeat projects, thereby reducing environmental impacts, and reducing costs to New England Power Company’s customers. The three project construction schedules are being coordinated so all of the work can be completed in series.
- The replacement of the structures and installation of OPGW will have the added benefit of allowing more renewable energy resources to connect into the system. Addressing climate change requires a major expansion of renewable energy and the infrastructure necessary to support and deliver that energy. NEP is actively taking steps to ensure that its system is ready to meet this critical challenge. Replacing infrastructure like the 313/343 & P142/O141 Lines helps to accomplish this goal.

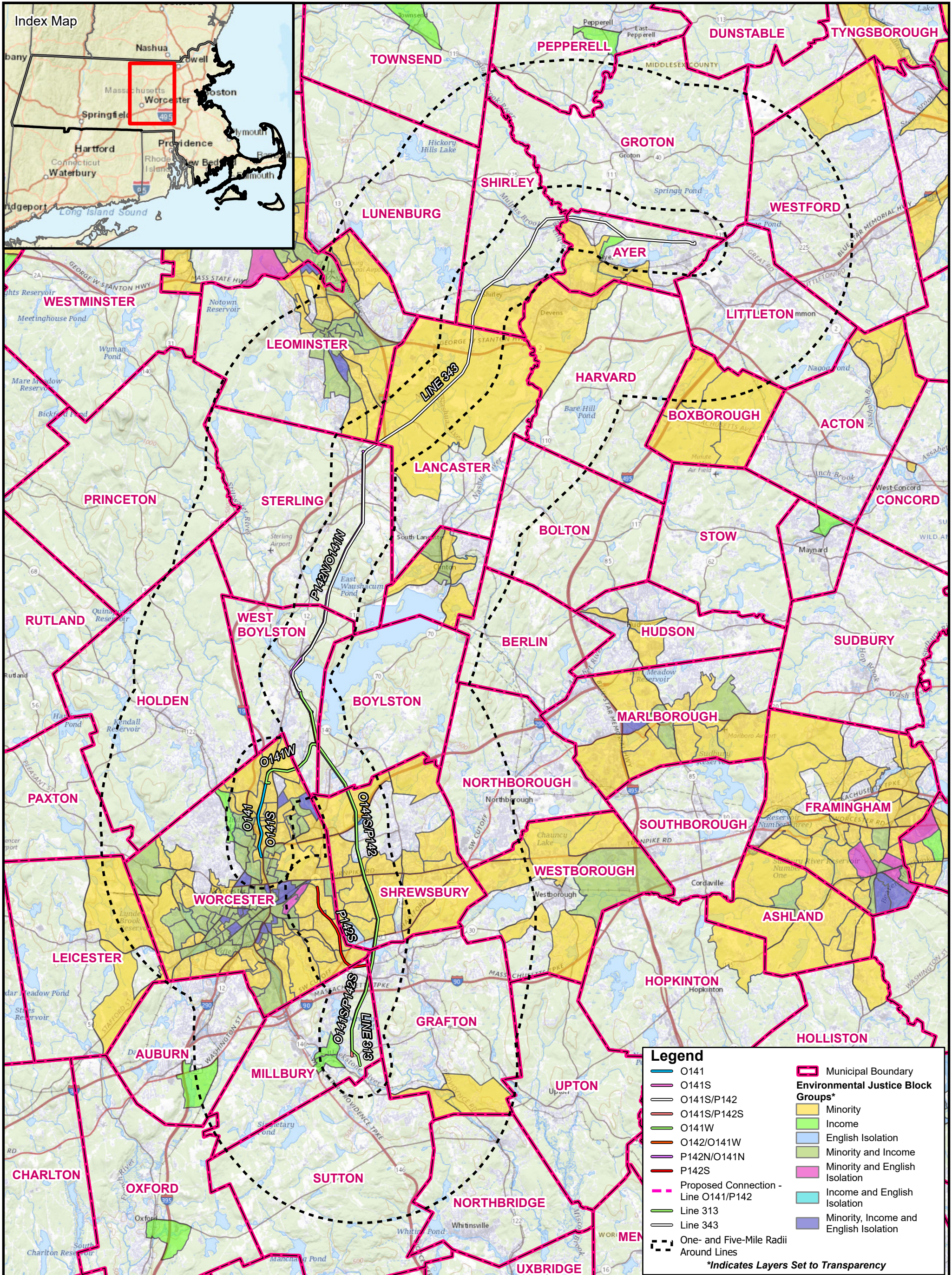
8. Describe how the community can request a meeting to discuss the project, and how the community can request oral language interpretation services at the meeting. Specify how to request other accommodations, including meetings after business hours and at locations near public transportation.

Communities and members of the public can access information related to the project in the following ways:

- A public website, www.centralmassreliability.com, provides information about the projects and will be updated with information on project timelines and other information as it becomes available. The website will be translated into Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Cape Verdean (aka Spanish and Portuguese Creole) and Chinese.
- The website contains a toll-free number and email address which are directed to the outreach team at NEP for follow up.
- A virtual informational meeting hosted by NEP will be on March 23, 2023:
 - The EJ Reference List will receive information related to this meeting via email.
 - Notifications (including translated) of this virtual meeting will be posted in the appropriate newspaper(s) with circulations to each municipality prior to the meeting date.
- Hard copies of project materials will be made available at municipal libraries and/or town halls or transfer stations.
- A copy of the project factsheet will be posted at the Spanish American Center in Leominster at their request.
- Upon request, in person project information meetings will be scheduled at convenient locations along the project routes as the projects progress.
- If you have additional questions, please contact 844-313-3437 or email us at info@centralmassreliability.com

Recipients of this form include organizations on the EJ Reference List provided by Massachusetts

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs per the Public Involvement Protocol as well as Agency and Other Reviewers.



Legend

- O141
- O141S
- O141S/P142
- O141S/P142S
- O141W
- O142/O141W
- P142N/O141N
- P142S
- Proposed Connection - Line O141/P142
- Line 313
- Line 343
- One- and Five-Mile Radii Around Lines
- Municipal Boundary
- Environmental Justice Block Groups***
- Minority
- Income
- English Isolation
- Minority and Income
- Minority and English Isolation
- Income and English Isolation
- Minority, Income and English Isolation

**Indicates Layers Set to Transparency*

N

1:180,000

0 7,500 15,000

Feet

LINES O141/P142 & 313/343

Environmental Justice Areas

Ayer, Shirley, Lancaster, Sterling, West Boylston,
 Boylston, Worcester, Shrewsbury, Millbury, MA

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Source: EOEEA, 2022

Base Map: World_Street_Map: Esri, HERE, Garmin, NGA, USGS, NPS
 USGSTopo: USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures

nationalgrid

Attachment B: 313/343 & O141/P142 ACR Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria (1-mile)

Municipality	EJ and Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria Status	Vulnerable Health Topic EJ Criteria Met	Statewide Rate per 1000
Ayer	Meets at least one Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	Heart Attack Rate per 10,000	41
Boylston	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Grafton	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Lancaster	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Millbury	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Shirley	Meets at least one Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	Heart Attack Rate per 10,000	35
Shrewsbury	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Sterling	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A

West Boylston	Does not meet any Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	N/A	N/A
Worcester	Meets at least one Vulnerable Health EJ Criteria	Lead Poisoning Rate per 1,000 Low Birth Weight Rate per 1,000 Pediatric Asthma Ed Visits Rate per 10,000	22 261 136

**Attachment C: 313/343 & O141/P142 ACR Project
Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) EJ Communities (1-Mile)**

Municipality	Geographic Area Name	EJ Criteria Description	Block Group	Minority Population (%)	Median Income	Percent of MA Median Income (%)
Ayer	Block Group 1, Census Tract 3251.01, Middlesex County	Minority	1	27.17	\$82,857	98.19
Ayer	Block Group 1, Census Tract 3251.02, Middlesex County	Income	1	18.65	\$52,120	61.76
Ayer	Block Group 4, Census Tract 3251.02, Middlesex County	Minority	4	29.37	\$81,500	96.58
Ayer	Block Group 5, Census Tract 3251.02, Middlesex County	Minority	5	39.61	\$68,462	81.13
Shirley	Block Group 2, Census Tract 3882, Middlesex County	Minority	2	41.12	\$69,342	82.17
Leominster	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7092.03, Worcester County	Minority	1	31.19	\$120,833	143.19
Leominster	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7092.04, Worcester County	Minority	1	43.82	\$92,567	109.70

Leominster	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7092.04, Worcester County	Minority	3	30.41	\$87,559	103.76
Lancaster	Block Group 4, Census Tract 7131, Worcester County	Minority	4	36.04	\$108,676	128.79
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7301, Worcester County	Minority	1	40.74	\$104,228	123.51
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7301, Worcester County	Minority	2	34.68	\$76,351	90.48
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7301, Worcester County	Minority	3	39.76	\$79,926	94.72
Worcester	Block Group 4, Census Tract 7301, Worcester County	Minority	4	37.69	\$60,430	71.61
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7302, Worcester County	Minority	1	36.09	\$107,574	127.48
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7302, Worcester County	Minority	2	44.44	\$55,938	66.29

Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7302, Worcester County	Minority, income and English isolation	3	25.36	\$44,681	52.95
Worcester	Block Group 5, Census Tract 7302, Worcester County	Minority	5	26.31	\$68,917	81.67
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7303, Worcester County	Minority	1	39.38	\$55,733	66.05
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7303, Worcester County	Minority	2	40.54	\$79,118	93.76
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7303, Worcester County	Minority	3	25.48	\$87,625	103.84
Worcester	Block Group 4, Census Tract 7303, Worcester County	Minority	4	39.07	\$55,682	65.99
Worcester	Block Group 5, Census Tract 7303, Worcester County	Minority	5	31.68	\$87,656	103.88
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7304.01, Worcester County	Minority	1	40.48	\$67,969	80.55

Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7304.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	32.21	\$87,875	104.14
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7304.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	3	75.44	\$31,365	37.17
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7304.02, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	52.94	\$54,875	65.03
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7304.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	69.64	\$61,607	73.01
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7305, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	42.03	\$49,046	58.12
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7305, Worcester County	Minority	2	70.51	\$59,375	70.36
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7305, Worcester County	Minority and income	3	41.78	\$44,125	52.29
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7306, Worcester County	Income	2	21.69	\$17,179	20.36

Worcester	Block Group 5, Census Tract 7306, Worcester County	Minority and income	5	24.91	\$34,952	41.42
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7316.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	48.36	\$17,012	20.16
Worcester	Block Group 5, Census Tract 7316.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	5	41.82	\$44,145	52.31
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7316.02, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	34.71	\$45,135	52.58
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7316.02, Worcester County	Minority, income and English isolation	2	34.35	\$25,921	30.72
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7317, Worcester County	Minority and income	2	46.12	\$34,856	41.31
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7318.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	44.13	\$47,208	55.94
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7318.01, Worcester County	Minority, income and English isolation	2	50.43	\$15,176	17.98

Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7318.02, Worcester County	Minority, income and English isolation	2	91.93	\$11,543	13.68
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7318.02, Worcester County	Minority	3	77.00	\$97,885	114.03
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7319, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	68.79	\$33,804	40.06
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7319, Worcester County	Minority and income	2	70.71	\$53,375	63.25
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7319, Worcester County	Minority and income	3	74.53	\$43,646	51.72
Worcester	Block Group 4, Census Tract 7319, Worcester County	Minority and income	4	71.39	\$37,429	44.36
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7320.01, Worcester County	Minority, income and English isolation	1	85.17	\$15,718	18.63
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7320.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	2	73.48	\$30,000	35.55

Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7320.02, Worcester County	Minority	1	62.88	\$65,965	78.17
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7320.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	39.74	\$60,893	72.16
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7320.02, Worcester County	Minority	3	33.37	\$67,188	79.62
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7322.01, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	35.56	\$45,224	53.59
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7322.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	47.57	\$76,250	90.36
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7322.02, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	41.89	\$51,163	60.63
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7322.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	38.89	\$92,344	109.43
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7322.03, Worcester County	Minority and English isolation	1	56.73	\$75,401	89.35

Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7322.03, Worcester County	Minority and English isolation	2	51.76	\$68,902	81.65
Worcester	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7322.03, Worcester County	Minority and income	3	68.75	\$39,732	47.08
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7323.01, Worcester County	Minority	1	42.72	\$61,607	73.01
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7323.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	35.12	\$68,795	81.53
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7323.02, Worcester County	Minority and income	1	56.12	\$39,207	46.46
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7323.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	46.02	\$77,561	91.91
Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7328.01, Worcester County	Minority	1	32.93	\$77,821	92.22
Worcester	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7328.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	42.81	\$70,766	83.86

Worcester	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7328.02, Worcester County	Minority	1	41.79	\$63,676	75.46
Millbury	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7372, Worcester County	Income	1	16.65	\$53,875	63.84
Millbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7372, Worcester County	Income	2	13.73	\$53,375	63.25
Shrewsbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7391.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	32.05	\$72,425	85.83
Shrewsbury	Block Group 3, Census Tract 7391.01, Worcester County	Minority	3	44.44	\$131,200	155.48
Shrewsbury	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7391.02, Worcester County	Minority	1	57.23	\$148,523	176.01
Shrewsbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7391.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	58.24	\$100,313	118.88
Shrewsbury	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7392.01, Worcester County	Minority	1	35.00	\$80,756	95.70

Shrewsbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7392.01, Worcester County	Minority	2	52.80	\$74,873	88.73
Shrewsbury	Block Group 1, Census Tract 7392.02, Worcester County	Minority	1	40.31	\$94,946	112.52
Shrewsbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7392.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	40.02	\$92,500	109.62
Shrewsbury	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7393, Worcester County	Minority	2	38.18	\$85,625	101.47
Shrewsbury	Block Group 4, Census Tract 7395, Worcester County	Minority	4	29.78	\$114,198	135.33
Harvard	Block Group 2, Census Tract 7614.02, Worcester County	Minority	2	47.70	\$133,594	158.31