

Massachusetts Town Tops the Nation with Its Percentage of Residents with College Educations on 2011 List

By Julie Rabinowitz

WOOLWICH, Maine—Boston may be known as a college town, but just down the road, two neighborhoods in Brookline have the highest percentage of residents per capita with college education or degrees, according to new 2011 forecast data released by Pinpoint Demographics. The data, broken-down by zip codes, include people who have taken some college courses to people with two-year, four-year and graduate and professional degrees.

“According to census data, Massachusetts leads the country in the percentage of adults 25 and older who have attained at least a bachelor’s degree so it’s no surprise that there are multiple Massachusetts zip codes in this top ten list,” noted Sonya Hagopian, vice president for communications for the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts.

Brookline and Cambridge, Mass., made the top ten, along with three neighborhoods in the Washington, D.C. area and two neighborhoods in Chicago. The West Village of New York City and the area surrounding the University of California-Irvine rounded out the list. Several neighborhoods on the list, like Irvine, Calif. and the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C., border or include large universities.

Ranked third, Cambridge’s neighborhood includes the western side of the city and the area around Harvard University, which would seem a natural location for dense population of highly educated people. However, two neighborhoods in Brookline beat out Cambridge—placing first and second. This does still fit the pattern, Hagopian explained. “There are about 30 public and private colleges and universities located in the Boston/Brookline/Cambridge area. Brookline is home to three colleges: Pine Manor College, Newbury College and Hellenic College, an Orthodox School of Theology. In addition, Wheelock College and Boston University, while based in Boston, both own property that extends to Brookline as well.”

Shahan Missaghian, a realtor in Brookline since 1986, believes that the convenience of commuting is a big attraction for highly educated professionals. “Brookline is the closest town to Boston and you have walking access to two or three T lines [public transportation] in places—the parking issues in Boston make the T attractive, even crucial for professionals.”

As Hagopian pointed out, “Greater Boston—the entire state of Massachusetts, really—is known for its highly educated work force, and its knowledge-based economy, which is often cited as helping the state recover more quickly from the country’s recession when compared to other states. Boston is home to many teaching hospitals, colleges and universities, financial institutions, biotech and high tech organizations. The consulting industry also thrives in the area, including law firms, accounting firms, etc. These industries tend to require at least a bachelor’s degree and in many instances, advance degrees.”

Missaghian described that, in her experience, many people with medical degrees are attracted in particular to Brookline. “It’s adjacent to all the great hospitals, they are all very close, so we

attract a lot of physicians either for residency or for fellowship. If they have families and small children, they prefer to live in Brookline so they can take the T within a few stops to their hospital. The schools are excellent.”

She added, “Brookline has access to everything, including ethnic restaurants, Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, coffee shops, gourmet food stores, the diversity is really strong. It is a very small town but it is attractive. Most of the houses are old and are beautiful but we have a lot of condos, too.”

Brookline’s population demographics reflect this young, highly educated population. According to 2009 U.S. Census Bureau data, residents there have a median age of around 35 and a median income of more than \$92,000. More than one quarter of people there speak a language other than English at home. Cambridge has a slightly younger and less affluent population, with a median age of 31 and median household income of about \$62,000. Irvine has a similar population profile to Brookline, with a median age of 33 and median household income of \$92,000. More than 40% of its residents speak a language other than English at home, in part a reflection of its large Asian (36%) and Hispanic (9%) populations. Brookline, in contrast, is about 78% white with smaller Asian (14%), Hispanic (5%) communities than Irvine. Both municipalities have about a 2% population of African Americans.

Pinpoint Demographics, a division of Barnes Reports, is a leading demographics research firm located in Woolwich, Maine. Pinpoint Demographics provides the most current, accurate and cost-effective data on population demographics, consumer spending, retail business and services businesses estimates for each of the 30,000+ U.S. zip codes. Pinpoint’s proprietary economic model uses exponential regression analysis to annually estimate 2011 and five year forecast 2016 populations, broken down by race, age, income, educational attainment and occupation.

Pinpoint Demographics’ databases are available in a number of products. The “America’s Neighborhoods” series are annual print handbooks of population and consumer spending databases by zip code or U.S. county. Pinpoint’s zip code databases are broken out by U.S. state and available for immediate purchase and download on its website www.pinpointdemographics.com. Free sample zip code data is available on www.uszipcodedemographics.com.

Top Ten Cities by Number of People with Higher Education, 2011

1. Brookline, Mass. 02446
2. Brookline, Mass. 02445
3. Cleveland Park, Washington, D.C. 20008
4. Georgetown, Washington, D.C. 20007
5. Lakeview, Chicago, Ill. 60657
6. Arlington, Va. 22201
7. DePaul and Lincoln Park, Chicago, Ill. 60614
8. Cambridge, Mass. 02138
9. West Village, New York, N.Y. 10014
10. Irvine, Calif. 92612

