

The Somerville Commission for Women
Somerville Status of Women
2005



The Somerville Commission for Women
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The Somerville Commission for Women (SCW) is glad to present the executive summary of the first annual executive summary of the Somerville Status of Women report. The full report will be made available in July.

Report

In December 2004, the process began to identify the needs of Somerville women. Two graduate interns from The Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy of UMass Boston, an intern from the Sociology undergraduate program of Tufts University, and the Executive Director of the Women's Commission became the data collection and surveying team. Approximately 6,000 surveys in English, Portuguese, Haitian-Creole, and Spanish were distributed with significant assistance from each of the public schools in Somerville, CAAS, the Council on Aging, and a volunteer, Mr. Mario Beauzile. In addition, an electronic version was created by Anne-Marie Fiore of the Somerville School Administration. We received 313 responses, which is consistent to our expectations.

Goal of Entire project

The report is an important tool for the Women's Commission, city agencies, and local community organizations to create the Commission's Action Agenda for the next three years. On June 27, the Women's Commission convened an ad hoc Steering Committee to review the executive summary findings and assist the Commission to prioritize the needs identified from Somerville's women and create the Action Agenda.

The SCW will partner with local specialists in community service to administer its Action Agenda. Funding for individual activities or proposed programs will be raised from community donations and grantwriting.

The intention of Women's Commission activities and programs to assist the city to allocate resources to women in an efficient and effective manner that reaches the needs of Somerville women and their families.

Goal of report

The report is a tool and a snapshot of Somerville women. It was conducted without rigorous academic review. The intention is to institute a system whereby the Commission looks to the community for direction through surveys and community meetings, then works with community partners to affect change.



Thank You!

The Somerville Commission for Women wishes to thank the generous support and effort of the following people and organizations:

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone and his administration

Noreen Burke, Somerville Director of Public Health

Maria Lucrecia Rodriguez, The Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy, UMass Boston

Lisa Allen Brown, The Center for Women in Politics & Public Policy, UMass Boston

Lilly Motta, Sociology Department, Tufts University

Public School Staff of each of the schools in Somerville

Somerville School Department

Community Action Agency of Somerville

Somerville Council on Aging

Mario Beauzile

Anne-Marie Fiore, Somerville School Administration



SCW Meetings & Recruitment

The Somerville Commission for Women meets each third Wednesday evening of the month at 7pm at 50 Evergreen Avenue. The Commission is actively recruiting Commissioners to participate in reviewing, planning, and supervising women's issues in Somerville.

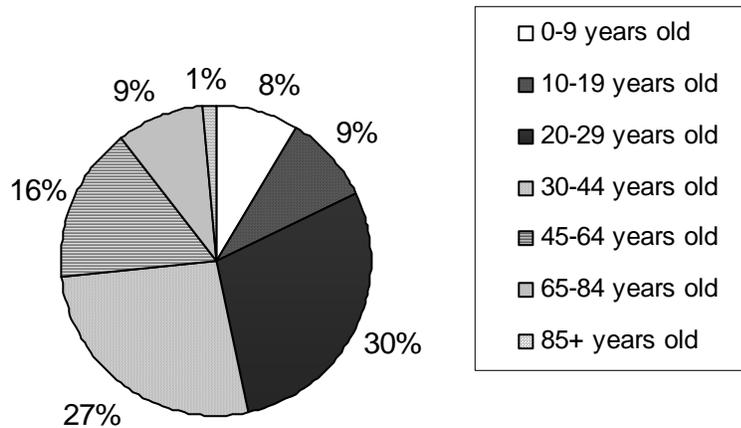
For further information

Please contact Sonja Darai, Executive Director of the Somerville Commission for Women, at (617) 625-6600, x2406, or sdarai@ci.somerville.ma.us.

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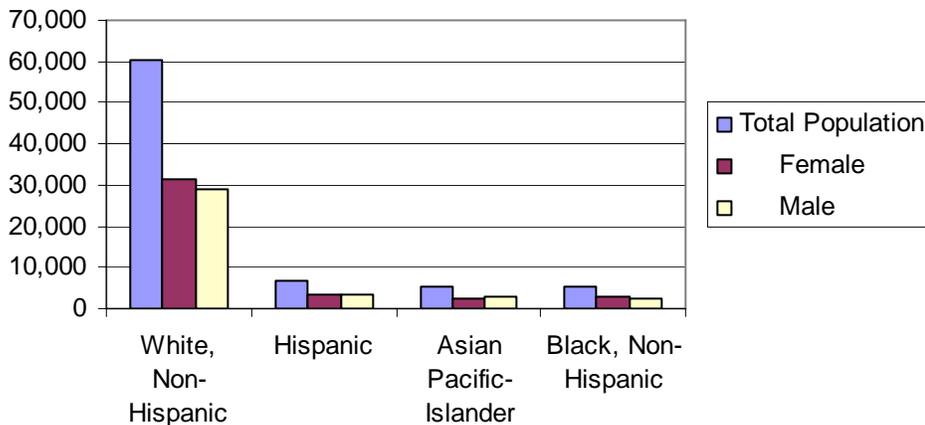
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Somerville Population: By Age



Source: 2000 US Bureau of the Census

Somerville Population: Ethnicity & Sex Breakdown



Source: 2000 US Bureau of the Census

The total population of Somerville, according to the 2000 US Bureau of the Census, is 77,478. An increase of 2% from the 1990 Census (76,210 people). There are 39,748 females and 37,730 males. Females are 51% of the population overall. Senior women make up 61% of the senior population, leaving 39% of the senior population as male (see page 10).

Somerville Sociodemographics

Education	Numbers	Percent
Less than high school	10,408	19.40%
High school grad	12,808	23.90%
Some college	8,686	16.20%
College grad plus	21,791	40.60%
Income		
Households with income < \$10,000	3,097	9.80%
Households with income > \$50,000	14,613	46.30%
Living Arrangement/Poverty		
Age 65+ and living alone	2,774	34.30%
Age 65+ and living alone, < 100% poverty	672	25.30%
Single parent households with kids	1,684	5.30%
Single parent households with kids, < 100% poverty	515	26.20%
Families with kids under age 18, < 100% poverty	865	13%
Population, < 100% poverty	9,395	12.50%
Population, < 200% poverty	20,019	26.60%
Immigrants		
Persons 5+ years:		
Speak English Well or Very Well	68,040	91.90%
Non-US Born	22,727	29.30%

Sources:

Education, Income, Poverty, Language, and Non-US born variables from 1990 and 2000 US Census; based on a sample of the population.

The facing page shows individual and family budget expenses for Somerville. This data is from “The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Massachusetts” by Diana Pearce with Jennifer Brooks, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) and the Women’s Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU), April 2003). This is the second update of the figures. For detailed information and data for any other city in Massachusetts, go to www.womensunion.org or www.weiu.org.

The 2003 Self-Sufficiency Standard, the latest data available, for Somerville shows that families need a high hourly rate to meet their basic needs: housing, food, taxes, health care, child care, and transportation. When we think of our expenses summed up to show just how much folks need to make it, we might forget the realities of the costs we see individually and not believe the results. Also, many people may look at the charts on the next page and think they don’t pay that much for this or that. However, there are ways people get by to avoid some of the costs others may have to pay: grandparents watching children can save on child care, a multi-unit house with several related families can share a lot of resources, spouses who work opposite schedules so that child care costs are avoided. There are many folks—senior citizens, single parents—who may not have extended families to rely on, who live on fixed incomes, who lack mobility to get to large budget stores to save money.

2005 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Persons in Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$9,570	\$11,950	\$11,010
2	12,830	16,030	14,760
3	16,090	20,110	18,510
4	19,350	24,190	22,260
5	22,610	28,270	26,010
6	25,870	32,350	29,760
7	29,130	36,430	33,510
8	32,390	40,510	37,260
For each additional person, add	3,260	4,080	3,750

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 70, No. 33, February 18, 2005, pp. 8373-8375.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard is based on minimum costs. Families living at the Standard level are not paying down debt or saving money. Expenses, such as food, are very minimal and does not include restaurant costs or extras. Transportation is kept to a bare minimum of costs for car, gasoline, maintenance, and insurance.

In Somerville, a single adult needs to earn \$11.39 per hour to meet their needs to be self-sufficient or an annual earning of \$24,059. The expenses skyrocket when that single adult becomes responsible for a preschooler: \$23.32 per hour or an annual salary of \$49,262.



The Self-Sufficiency Standard, 2003

Somerville, MA

Part One

			Adult + infant +	Adult + preschooler +	Adult + schoolage +	Adult + teenager	Adult + infant + preschooler +	2 Adults + infant +
Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult + preschooler	preschooler	schoolage	schoolage	schoolage	schoolage	preschooler
Housing	1074	1343	1343	1343	1343	1343	1680	1343
Child Care	0	964	1881	1374	411	2292	1881	1881
Food	178	270	351	403	464	472	504	504
Transportation	228	233	233	233	233	233	233	447
Health Care	92	198	224	219	234	245	263	263
Miscellaneous	157	301	403	357	268	492	444	444
Taxes	275	887	1397	1056	668	1901	1352	1352
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-40	-80	-80	-40	-80	-80	-80
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-50	-100	-100	-100	-150	-100	-100
Self-Sufficiency Wage --Hourly	\$11.39	\$23.32	\$32.12	\$27.31	\$19.78	\$40.26	\$17.20	\$17.20
								<i>per adult</i>
--Monthly	\$2,005	4105	5652	\$4,806	\$3,481	\$7,086	\$6,055	\$6,055
--Annual	\$24,059	\$49,262	\$67,829	\$57,670	\$41,774	\$85,028	\$72,658	\$72,658

The Self-Sufficiency Standard, 2003

Somerville, MA

Part Two

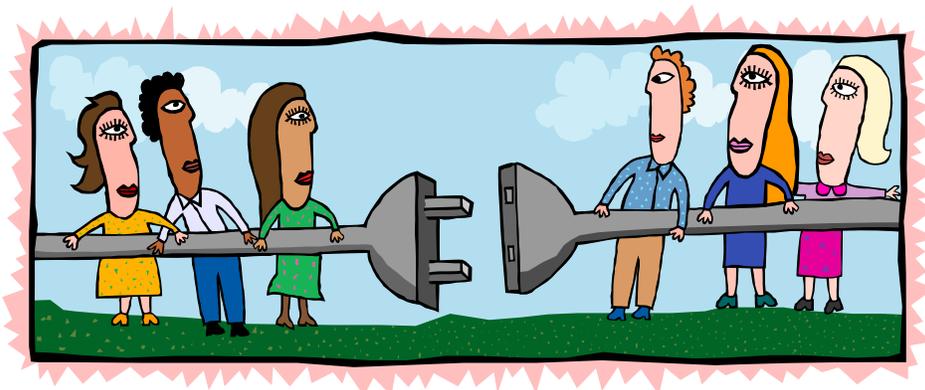
			Adult + schoolage +	Adult + schoolage +			2 Adults + schoolage +
Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult + schoolage	schoolage	schoolage	2 Adults	schoolage	schoolage
Housing	1074	1343	1343	1680	1074	1343	1343
Child Care	0	411	821	1232	0	411	821
Food	178	315	445	562	351	480	595
Transportation	228	233	233	233	441	447	447
Health Care	92	210	231	253	228	249	271
Miscellaneous	157	251	307	396	209	293	348
Taxes	275	672	792	1189	520	753	864
Earned Income							
Tax Credit (-)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-40	-80	-80	0	-40	-80
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-50	-100	-150	0	-50	-100
Self-Sufficiency Wage --Hourly	\$11.39	\$19.00	\$22.69	\$30.20	\$8.02	\$11.04	\$12.81
					<i>per adult</i>	<i>per adult</i>	<i>per adult</i>
--Monthly	\$2,005	3345	3994	\$5,315	\$2,824	\$3,885	\$4,508
--Annual	\$24,059	\$40,136	\$47,928	\$63,775	\$33,884	\$46,624	\$54,102

Source: *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Massachusetts*, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), Dr. Diana Pearce at the University of Washington, and the Women's Educational and Industrial Union. April 2003. For more details on the report, conclusions, a

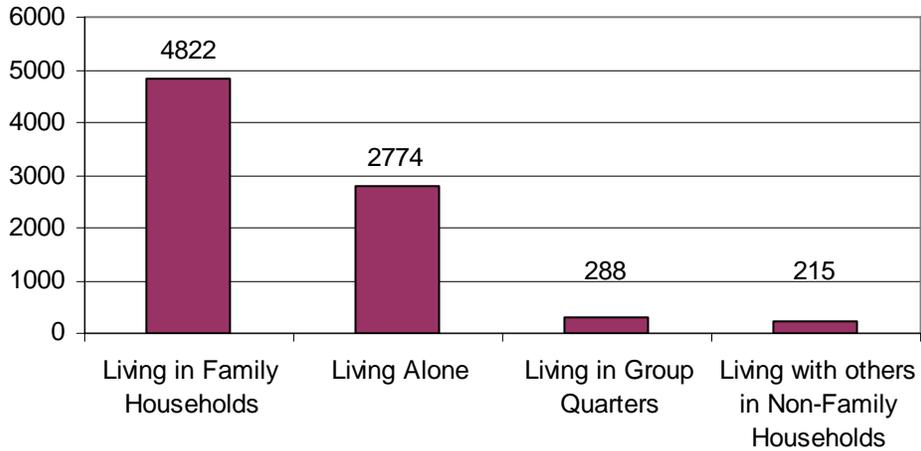
Somerville is a diverse community that with a third of its population younger than 20 years old or older than 65 years. The vast majority of the community continues to be White, Non-Hispanic, yet we have 22% of the population who identify themselves as non-White in the last 2000 Census.

Financially, the community needs to have a minimum of \$24,059 (single adult) to meet their needs and be self-sufficient according to the Self-Sufficiency Standard (SSS). For a family of four (two adults, two school-age children), the parents need to earn \$54,102 to meet their basic needs of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, taxes, and miscellaneous expenses. The 2005 Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for one person is \$9,570 and for four people is \$19,350. The individuals and families who fall between the gap of the FPL and the SSS need to make ends meet without qualifying for most government assistance. According to the chart on page 6, 25% of seniors who live alone live below the Federal Poverty Level. Additionally, 26% of single parent households with their own children live below the FPL. For families with kids under 18 years, 13% are living below FPL. In general, 12.5% of the Somerville population lives below the Federal Poverty Level while a quarter of Somerville people live below 200% of the FPL.

Seniors and single parents are most vulnerable to living below a self-sufficient level because they do not have another adult to share expenses. Knowing the Self-Sufficiency Standard, however, allows the community to come up with creative and supportive programs, support groups, and acknowledge that not every individual or family who is working is making ends meet. Individuals who can come together into groups can find support and begin to connect with their neighbors to find these creative ways to support each other and themselves.

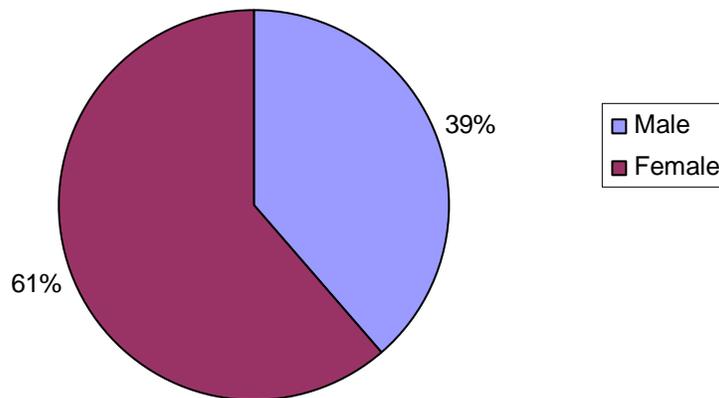


Living Arrangements for Seniors, 65+ years old



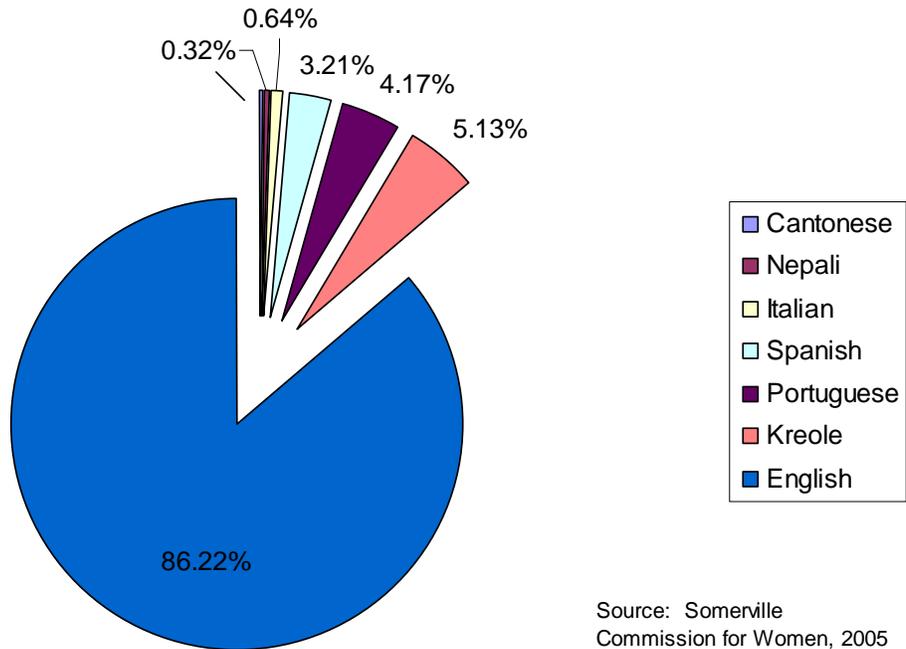
Source: Somerville Commission for Women, 2005

Senior Population Percent by Sex, 60+ years old

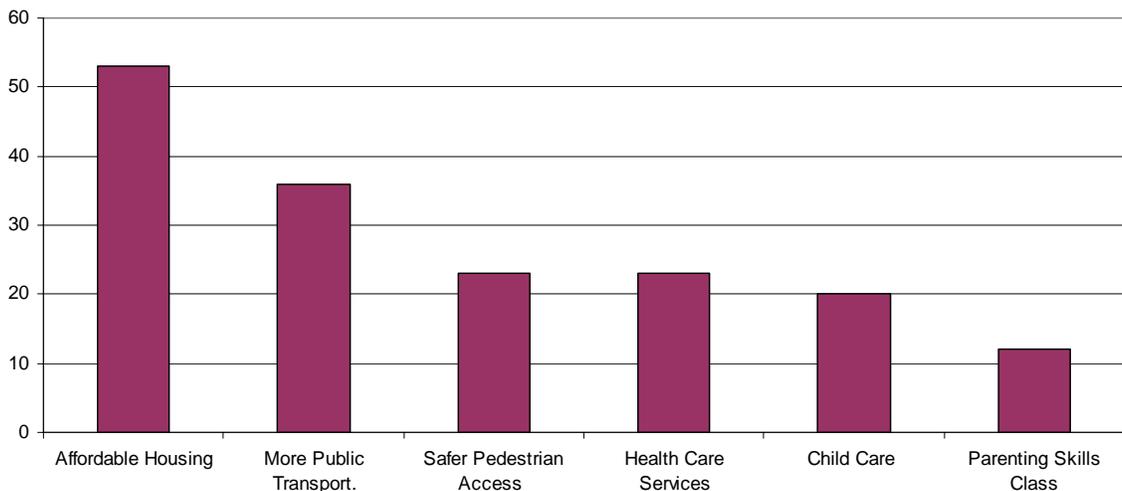


Source: Somerville Commission for Women, 2005

Women's Needs: Respondents by Primary Language Spoken at Home

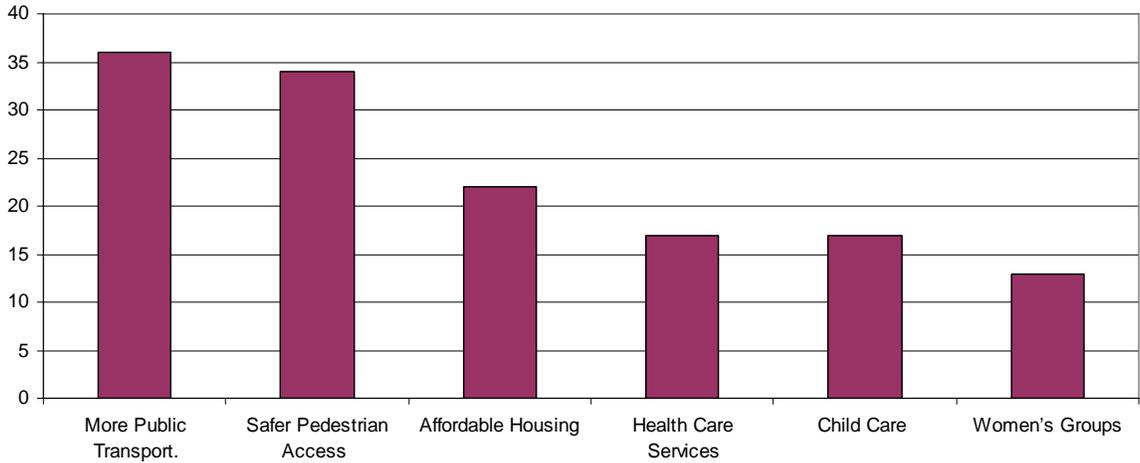


Women's Needs: Priority One, top five



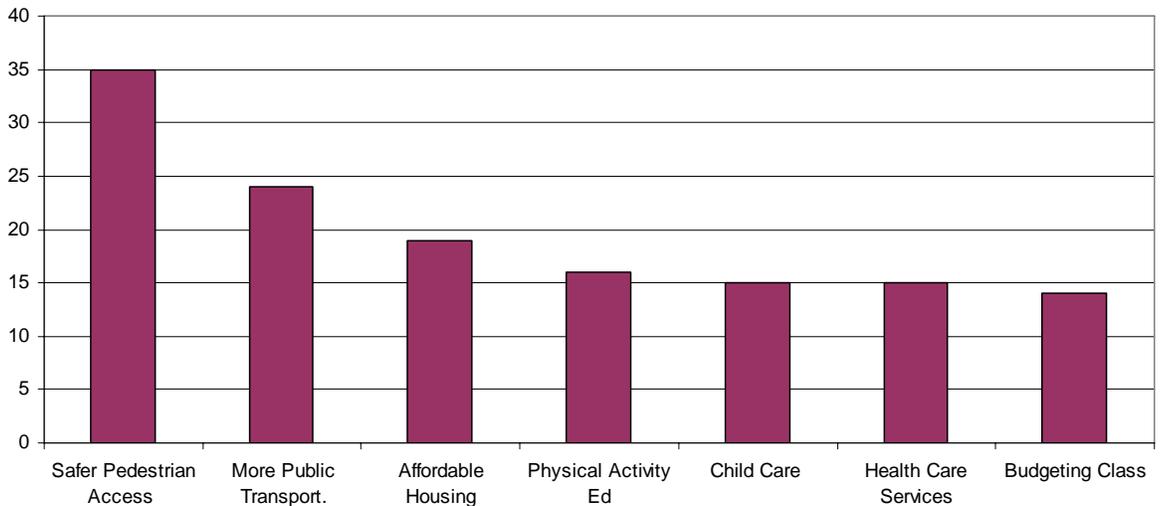
Source: Somerville Commission for Women, 2005

Women's Needs: Priority Two, top six



Source: Somerville Commission for Women, 2005

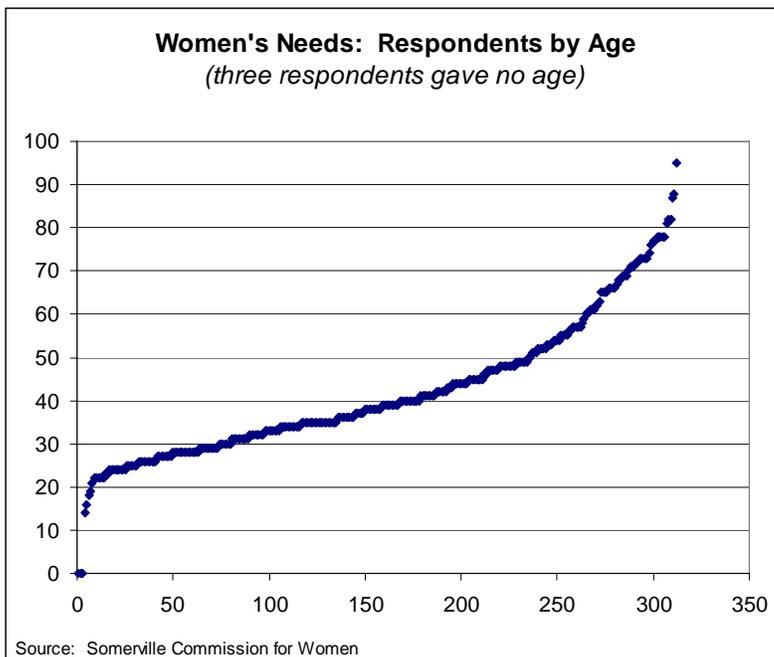
Women's Needs: Priority Three, top seven



Source: Somerville Commission for Women, 2005

In order to better provide services to Somerville women and to assist the more efficient and effective allocation of resources to support women and their families, the Somerville Commission for Women conducted a needs assessment survey of women in the city. The research team surveyed 313 women from the ages of 14 to 95.

This Executive Summary reports the findings of respondents three highest priorities. The three charts on pages 11 and 12, show the top five to seven priorities. More women in Somerville listed affordable housing as their highest priority. More public transportation, safer pedestrian access, health care services, and parenting support were also of highest priority.



Somerville women listed other priorities such as women's groups, physical activity education, and budgeting classes among the high priorities. Interestingly, a significant number of women reported their fourth priority (not shown graphically in this report) as women's groups. Showing that women find their highest priorities taken by affordable housing, traveling safely and conveniently, and family or health. However, the next priority after meeting these basic needs is women's support groups. In other cultures such as in Asia, women's groups are significant in the community to make decisions for their neighborhood, allocate scarce resources, receive educational information from the government or social services agencies, resolve disputes informally, and support women with families issues such as domestic violence, extreme poverty, or loss of family.



The findings from the surveys that show trends across various communities (such as the seniors, ethnic groups, or other age groups) show that gardening clubs, nutritional information, and job skills/money management are all important to many women in Somerville. These cross-tabulations will be more defined in the full Somerville Status of Women report to be released in July 2005.

In conclusion, Somerville is an amazing community wealthy in its rich diversity, access to neighboring cities such as Cambridge, Boston, Medford, Arlington, and beyond. There are a great many women in Somerville, almost 40,000 strong, and 51% of all people in Somerville are female, 61% of all seniors are female.

There are a great many demands on families to make ends meet. We must meet basic needs and have access to resources such as affordable housing, public transportation, job training, money management, and healthy lifestyle education, are essential for women to make ends meet. In addition to surveying women on their needs, a handout was sent to all families via children in public schools. Over forty-five women filled out their handout for more information about selected healthy lifestyle education and family nutrition. Many women selected women's groups as one of their top five priorities for their needs.

The Women's Commission commits to serving women and their community. On June 27, the Commission convenes an ad hoc Steering Committee to prioritize the needs identified and create the Women's Commission three-year Action Agenda. The Steering Committee is made up of community leaders who have experience in working with women, who have the power to allocate resources, and who can guide the Commission to take a strong step forward to serve the women effectively and efficiently with very scarce resources.

To help the Commission meet this commitment, donations from the community are essential. The Women's Commission raises all of its program money from donations and grantwriting. Every dollar donated to the Women's Commission goes toward programs.

For more information, contact Sonja Darai, Executive Director of the Somerville Commission for Women, at (617) 625-6600, x2406.





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