

Hingham Unity Council: Racial Disparities on the South Shore

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Executive Summary

This report examines racial disparities across four key areas—home mortgages, student discipline, school representation, and arrest records—on the South Shore, using the process from the Reparations for Melrose toolkit. The analysis covers the period from 2010 to the present, focusing on Hingham, Weymouth, Cohasset, Rockland, Hanover, Scituate, and Hull. The findings reveal significant racial disparities in all areas, with Black individuals consistently underrepresented in homebuying and school representation while facing disproportionate rates of discipline and arrest relative to their percentage of the broader population. Despite occasional positive trends, systemic challenges persist, necessitating targeted initiatives to foster diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

Introduction

The Hingham Unity Council is part of the South Shore Unity Council, a group of South Shore towns that collaborate to promote diversity, inclusion, and belonging in our communities. The Hingham Unity Council(HUC) seeks “to bridge differences in experience and perspective to build a culture that respects and values the dignity and humanity of every community member”¹.

From June through August 2024, the Hingham Unity Council engaged in a data collection process to collect information about the racial climate across several towns on the South Shore. This report aims to highlight racial disparities on the South Shore through a comprehensive analysis following the methodology suggested in the Reparations for Melrose toolkit and in data available in public online records. By illuminating these disparities, the South Shore Unity Council hopes to spark conversations that promote equity and establish a data-driven foundation for enhancing equity, inclusivity, and diversity.

¹“Vision, Purpose and Tenets.” *Hingham Unity Council*, 27 Mar. 2021, hinghamunity.org/vision-purpose-and-tenets/.

Despite varying degrees of diversity, the overall population in South Shore towns is predominantly white, with African American populations ranging between .02%(Hingham) and 6%(Rockland). Examining racial disparities in these communities is crucial to understanding and addressing systemic inequalities.

While individual data points on racial disparities in South Shore communities exist, they have never been compiled into a cohesive analysis. Our methodology involved gathering extensive data from 2010 to the present across several South Shore towns, including Hingham, Weymouth, Cohasset, Rockland, Hanover, Scituate, and Hull. This comprehensive data collection seeks to identify patterns and trends over time and across towns with varying demographics, rather than focusing on isolated data points.

The report examines four key areas:

- I. Home mortgages: Disparities in homebuying can lead to significant differences in community composition and resource allocation
- II. Student discipline: Examining discipline patterns helps uncover biases and systemic issues in a school environment
- III. School representation: representation in schools affects diversity training, exposure, and inclusivity
- IV. Arrest records: Analyzing arrest records reveals trends in law enforcement practices and their impact on different racial groups.

These categories are interconnected, as disparities in homebuying can lead to underrepresentation in schools, which affects diversity training and education, ultimately influencing school discipline and arrest records.

The objectives of this report are to provide a thorough, data-driven understanding of racial disparities across key areas, encourage community members and leaders to engage in meaningful conversations about equity, and offer recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders to promote inclusivity and unity on the South Shore. This report begins with a data-driven presentation and analysis of the data. Then, we ask questions and offer suggestions for reform.

Home Mortgages

Black homebuyers represent a very small portion of the overall homebuyer population across all South Shore towns, ranging from an average of 0.1%(Cohasset) to 6.47%(Rockland) between 2020 to 2023. Rockland (6.47%) and Weymouth (2.15%) show the highest percentages of Black homebuyers. Conversely, Hingham(0.30%), Scituate(0.20%), and Cohasset(0.17%) have the lowest numbers of Black homebuyers, demonstrating minimal diversity, potentially due to higher housing costs, less inclusive community environments, or systemic barriers in the homebuying process. Despite their low percentages, Hingham, Cohasset, and Scituate are showing slight positive trends with an increase of Black homebuyers of .4% since 2020. The cost of housing in many South Shore towns is likely a significant barrier for Black homebuyers, considering that the average wealth for a Black family in Boston, MA is \$8 compared to a white family's \$247,000².

Despite some towns becoming more diverse, if we want to build integrated communities, we need to examine how to increase efforts to address the underlying causes of these disparities,

²Hooks, Kris. "Introducing 'money, Power, Inequality,' a New Boston Globe Initiative Probing the Racial Wealth Gap - The Boston Globe." *BostonGlobe.Com*, The Boston Globe, 13 Dec. 2023, www.bostonglobe.com/2023/12/11/metro/boston-globe-money-power-inequality-racial-wealth-gap/#:~:text=It's%20been%20nearly%20a%20decade.net%20worth%20for%20white%20Bostonians.

such as economic barriers and systemic discrimination, which are crucial for promoting equitable access to housing.

The disparity in homeownership on the South Shore reflects a broader issue across the United States. Lower Black homeownership and the racial wealth gap are byproducts of systemic racism, including the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, redlining, and other anti-Black policies that targeted Black people and predominantly Black neighborhoods. For instance, Rockland and Weymouth show the highest percentages of Black homebuyers on the South Shore, yet their figures remain significantly lower than those of white homebuyers. This mirrors the national homeownership rate where Black Americans have a homeownership rate of 46.4% compared to 75.8% of white families.

Additionally, the valuation disparity seen nationally, where homes in predominantly Black neighborhoods across the country are valued at \$48,000 less than those in predominantly white neighborhoods, resulting in a cumulative loss in equity of approximately \$156 billion³ resonates with the situation in South Shore towns. In these towns, systemic barriers and economic factors contribute to lower homeownership rates among black residents.

Addressing these systemic issues, such as the lack of banking institutions and reliance on predatory lending practices, is essential for achieving equitable homeownership. Just as 54% of minority populations are underbanked nationally,⁴ Black communities in the South Shore face similar challenges, expressing the need for targeted efforts to promote equitable access to housing and close the racial wealth gap.

³Ray, Rashawn. "Homeownership, Racial Segregation, and Policy Solutions to Racial Wealth Equity." *Brookings*, 5 Feb. 2024, www.brookings.edu/articles/homeownership-racial-segregation-and-policies-for-racial-wealth-equity/.

⁴ Ibid.

Link to Home Mortgages spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IAoR1iuWg9pBIpmMDD1gt3YKvT0x8ApHNFYj9vVfVI4/edit?usp=sharing>

Representation in Schools

Both student and teacher demographics are predominantly white across all South Shore towns, highlighting a significant lack of racial diversity within educational environments.

The white student population in South Shore typically ranges from 65%(Rockland and Weymouth) to over 90%(Hingham, Cohasset, Scituate, Hull, Hanover), indicating a lack of diversity that can affect the cultural competence and inclusivity of the school environment. Black students generally comprise only 1% to 8% of the student population; for example, Hingham has between 0.8% to 2.3% Black students, and Weymouth has between 3.6% to 8.4% from 2010 to 2023. According to research from Emma Gallegos at EdSource.org, 21% of current Black students say they feel discriminated against at their institution and Black students were 31% more likely to say they were discriminated against at less diverse institutions⁵.

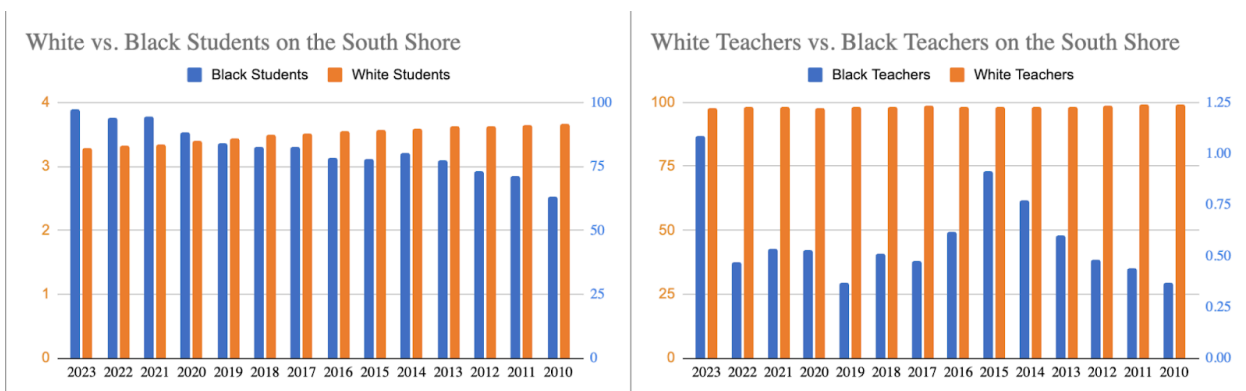
The teaching staff is overwhelmingly white, often exceeding 95%, with Hull at 100% white teachers and Hingham ranging from 96.7% to 97.8%. Black teachers are significantly underrepresented, often constituting less than 1% of the teaching staff; for instance, Cohasset has 0% to 1.38% Black teachers, and Rockland has between 1.8% to 5.6%. This underrepresentation suggests systemic barriers to hiring and retaining Black educators.

⁵Gallegos, Emma. "Update: 'exceptional' Barriers Stop Black Students from Succeeding in Higher Ed." *EdSource*, EdSource, 18 Apr. 2023, edsources.org/updates/exceptional-barriers-stop-black-students-from-succeeding-in-higher-ed#:~:text=Black%20students%20are%20less%20likely,enrolling%20in%20the%20first%20place.

Black students who have one Black teacher in K-3 are 13% more likely to graduate from high school and 19% more likely to go to college. If they have two, they are 32% more likely to go to college⁶. Additionally, if students of color grow up in an environment where they see few or no peers or teachers who look like them, they may feel like outsiders. Therefore, the presence of diverse teachers is crucial for providing role models and mentorship to students of color, creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, fostering a sense of belonging, and building academic confidence among minority students⁷.

Diversity in schools enhances students' cognitive and critical thinking skills by exposing them to various perspectives, thus improving creativity and problem-solving abilities. Additionally, it prepares students for professional environments, with 96% of major employers valuing the ability to work with diverse backgrounds.⁸ Intragroup contact benefits underrepresented and marginalized students educationally, as same-race interactions provide social and academic support in challenging environments. Increasing representation of these groups prevents them from being tokenized and helps overcome status leveling and stereotyped roles, leading to higher quality ideas in diverse brainstorming sessions.⁹

By implementing targeted recruitment and retention programs for Black educators and students and fostering inclusive policies and practices, South Shore schools can create a more supportive environment. This will help minority students feel valued and supported, enhancing their academic success and preparing all students for diverse professional environments.



Link to Representation in Schools:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1tuyIiwEv28SBgff60DXhlqdDDrDP1JQLPB-EEUubxTQ/edit?gid=1672576924#gid=1672576924>

Student Discipline

White students outnumber Black students in all South Shore towns, with the majority of South Shore school districts (excluding Weymouth and Rockland) consisting of over a 90% white student population. In absolute numbers, more white students are disciplined due to their larger population; however, this statistic masks the relative rates of discipline when compared to their demographic proportions. Black students face disproportionately higher disciplinary actions and are up to 9.16%(Scituate) more likely to be disciplined than their white peers, suggesting biases or systemic issues within school disciplinary practices, and indicating potential unequal treatment and harsher penalties for similar infractions compared to their white peers. Towns like Cohasset(7.43%), Hanover(7.82%), and Scituate(9.16%). Conversely, Hull(1.39%) and Weymouth(1.91%) have the lowest discipline rates for Black students relative to white students.

The disproportionate discipline of Black students can stem from implicit biases among staff, cultural misunderstandings, and unequal enforcement of rules, leading to harsher punishments and more frequent disciplinary actions against Black students¹⁰. Also, Black students tend to experience harsher disciplinary measures at higher rates than their peers in public schools in the United States; Black students are 4 times more likely to experience suspension than their White peers.¹¹ Excessive disciplinary actions against Black students can

¹⁰Peterson, Emily. "Racial Inequality in Public School Discipline for Black Students in the United States." *Ballard Brief*, Ballard Brief, 31 July 2023, ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/racial-inequality-in-public-school-discipline-for-black-students-in-the-united-states

¹¹ibid.

negatively impact their academic performance, increase dropout rates, and perpetuate long-term consequences on the student's educational and career opportunities. Implementing restorative justice practices in South Shore schools can address conflicts constructively, fostering understanding rather than punitive measures.

Link to Student Discipline Spreadsheet:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13LmIeOv4hl4sbtzbSXAvf7V28Xu2fdyXvahwFU3_Xi4/edit?gid=1810636086#gid=1810636086

Arrest Records

Black individuals are overrepresented in arrest statistics relative to their population percentages across all South Shore towns. For example, Hull has a 5071% arrest rate of Black individuals relative to Black residents, thus demonstrating the need for a thorough examination of enforcement practices to address potential biases in policing. Hingham has seen a notable increase in Black arrests, peaking around 2019, peaking in 2023 at 14.61% of arrests being Black individuals. This is a 50% increase from 9.27% in 2019, suggesting either an increase in policing efforts targeting Black individuals or changes in demographic patterns that are not aligned with equitable enforcement. Weymouth exhibits variable trends with significant peaks in Black arrests, especially after 2020, which may reflect sporadic enforcement practices or periodic issues disproportionately affecting Black communities. Hanover shows high percentages of Black arrests with fluctuations over the years, ranging from 4.17% to 17.28%. Though it is difficult to tell from the data alone, this could indicate unstable enforcement patterns that might correlate with shifts in policing strategies or community relations. Hull has a general decrease in Black arrests aside from one peak in 2022 by nearly 8%, suggesting general improvements in policing practices or community engagement efforts. Cohasset, while showing some variability,

generally maintains lower percentages, ranging from 0-17%, indicating fewer racial disparities in arrests. Rockland has consistent percentages of Black arrests from 2015 onwards, remaining between 10-13.25%, but lacks data from 2016 onwards.

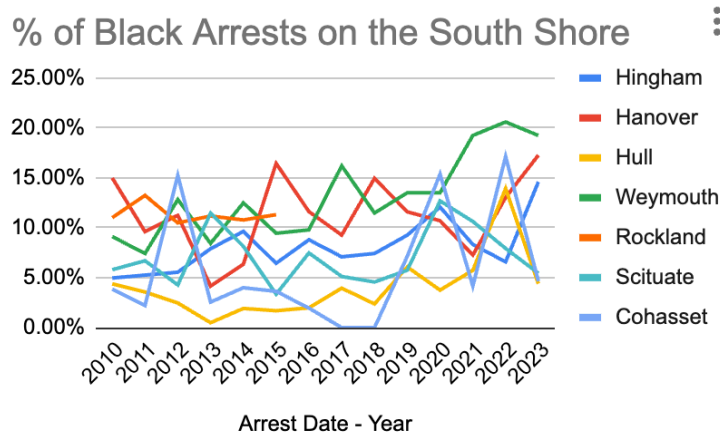
The overrepresentation of Black individuals in arrest statistics may indicate systemic biases within policing practices, with implicit biases, discriminatory policies, and unequal application of laws contributing to these disparities. This issue extends beyond the South Shore to the whole of the US. In 2018, Black people “were arrested for nonfatal violent crimes at a rate of 33% compared to the U.S. population's 13%”¹². A Black person is “five times more likely to be stopped without just cause than a white person. 32% of the US population is represented by African Americans and Hispanics, compared to 56% of the US incarcerated population being represented by African Americans and Hispanics. 87% of Black adults say the U.S. criminal justice system is more unjust towards Black people; 61% of white adults agree.”¹³ High arrest rates for Black individuals can have significant impacts, including mistrust in law enforcement, disruption of communities, and long-term socio-economic disadvantages, perpetuating cycles of inequality and marginalization¹⁴. Comprehensive police reform, including bias training, community policing initiatives, and transparent accountability measures, is crucial to address and reduce racial disparities in arrests.

The Hingham Police Department (HPD) works diligently to promote equity, fairness, and justice, and to ensure that all community members are treated with respect and dignity. Officers undergo ongoing training on diversity and implicit bias and maintain accountability and

¹²“Criminal Justice Fact Sheet.” *NAACP*, 4 Nov. 2022, naacp.org/resources/criminal-justice-fact-sheet.

¹³“Criminal Justice Fact Sheet.” *NAACP*, 4 Nov. 2022, naacp.org/resources/criminal-justice-fact-sheet.

¹⁴Initiative, Prison Policy. “Race and Ethnicity.” *Prison Policy Initiative*, www.prisonpolicy.org/research/race_and_ethnicity/. Accessed 2 Aug. 2024.



transparency. By committing to fair and impartial policing, HPD strives to build mutual trust and respect with the community.¹⁵

Link to the Arrest Records Spreadsheet:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1X7IXF9KcfKjxuosa0RiMNt7wbm0Mgydm_xapV4zZ

[PIU/edit?usp=sharing](#)

Recommendations

Home Mortgages

Recommendations include:

- I. A local government housing authority could develop and implement financial assistance programs specifically aimed at minority homebuyers to help bridge the economic gap, including reducing uneven costs of mortgages for Black homebuyers, increasing support for small-dollar loans, and extending credit and

¹⁵“Civil Rights and Equity: Hingham Police Department, MA.” *Civil Rights and Equity* | Hingham Police Department, MA, www.hpd.org/244/Civil-Rights-and-Equity. Accessed 2 Aug. 2024.

down payment assistance to borrowers impacted by discriminatory housing and lending practices.¹⁶

- II. Fair housing advocacy groups and law firms could collaborate to advocate for and enforce inclusive housing policies that prevent discrimination and promote diversity in homebuying practices.
- III. A local community development group could initiate community outreach programs to educate and support potential homebuyers from diverse backgrounds, making the homebuying process more accessible and transparent
- IV. A local housing oversight board could establish mechanisms to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at increasing diversity in homebuying to ensure they are responsive to the needs of the community.

Student Representation:

Recommendations include:

- I. The school administration could implement targeted recruitment and retention programs to increase the number of Black teachers and staff in schools, which could include partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), mentorship programs, and incentives for teachers of color; providing ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion training for all staff to ensure that schools are welcoming and supportive environments for all students. This DEI training could be added to the curriculum at the start of the next school year in September

¹⁶Ray, Rashawn. "Homeownership, Racial Segregation, and Policy Solutions to Racial Wealth Equity." *Brookings*, 5 Feb. 2024, www.brookings.edu/articles/homeownership-racial-segregation-and-policies-for-racial-wealth-equity/.

2025. Towns with no Black teachers could aim to hire two Black educators by 2025.

- II. The school staff could create support programs for students of color to foster a sense of community and belonging, which might help mitigate feelings of isolation that minority students might experience. This could be implemented at the start of the next school year in September 2025.
- III. Partnerships with programs like METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity), which exists in some South Shore towns including Hingham, Cohasset, and Scituate, could create a more diverse community on the South Shore and provide metropolitan students with an equitable education.¹⁷ Schools could communicate with METCO to increase the number of METCO students and to begin this program at schools where it does not yet exist. Communication about this could begin as soon as possible so that more METCO students may join school districts by September 2025.

Student Discipline

Recommendations include:

- I. The Superintendent, in partnership with the School Committee, could review existing disciplinary policies and procedures to identify and eliminate any that may disproportionately affect Black students, ensuring that disciplinary actions are fair, consistent, and transparent. Schools can develop a DEI or assign this task to counselors by September 2025.
- II. The School Committee, school administration, and parent-teacher organizations can work to develop support systems such as counseling, mentoring, and

¹⁷“Metco – Partner Districts – Schools.” *METCO Incorporated*, 16 Apr. 2024, metcoinc.org/about/partner-districts/.

behavioral intervention programs to assist students in addressing the underlying issues that lead to disciplinary actions.¹⁸

Arrest records

Recommendations include:

- I. The police department can focus on transparent data reporting, where law enforcement agencies collect and publicly report detailed data on arrests, disaggregated by race, to ensure transparency and accountability.¹⁹ This could be implemented by 2025.
- II. Advocating for the creation of state commissions that would examine the factors that contribute to racial inequity at every stage of the justice system, and provide legislative, and administrative solutions to address these factors.²⁰
- III. The police department and communities can focus on engaging with Black communities to understand their concerns and experiences with law enforcement, informing policies and practices that promote just policing.
- IV. The police department's HR could focus on increasing diversity within police departments to better reflect the communities they serve, fostering cultural understanding, and reducing biases.
- V. Implementing training to reduce racial bias, and making such training mandatory at every level of the criminal justice system, including police officers, public defenders, prosecutors, judges, and jury members.²¹

¹⁸*Discipline Is Still Biased. How to Reduce Racial Disparities in Suspension Rates*, www.apa.org/monitor/2023/10/racial-disparities-suspension-rates. Accessed 2 Aug. 2024.

¹⁹"Eliminate Racial Sentencing Disparities." *NAACP*, 13 June 2022, naacp.org/resources/eliminate-racial-sentencing-disparities.

²⁰*ibid.*

²¹*ibid.*

Questions

The collection of this data has sparked several questions, which may assist in finding the root cause of the issues to make tangible changes. These questions include:

Home Mortgages:

- What specific barriers do Black homebuyers face in towns with the lowest diversity?
- What is Rockland doing differently from other communities and how can other towns on the South Shore learn from this town?
- What role can local governments and community organizations play in fostering a more inclusive housing market?
- How can we measure the long-term impact of increased diversity in homebuying on community cohesion and equity?
- What does the loan process look like for a Black homebuyer? Are they getting rejected more frequently than White homebuyers? If so, why and at what stage of the loan process?

Representation in Schools:

- What barriers do Black teachers face in being hired and retained in South Shore schools?
- How can we create more inclusive and supportive environments for students of color in predominantly white schools?
- What are the best practices from other regions or schools that have successfully increased diversity among their staff and student populations?
- How can we measure the long-term impact of increased diversity on student outcomes and school culture?
- Because of the lack of black homebuyers, there are fewer black students. Is this the only reason black students are underrepresented? What can we do to improve these statistics?
- How do programs like Metco impact these statistics?

Student Discipline:

- What specific types of disciplinary actions most disproportionately affect Black students?
- How can schools implement and sustain bias training programs effectively?
- What are the best practices for integrating restorative justice into existing disciplinary systems?
- How can schools ensure that disciplinary policies are applied consistently and fairly across all student demographics?

Arrest Records:

- What specific factors contribute to the overrepresentation of Black individuals in arrest statistics?
- How can law enforcement agencies effectively implement and sustain bias training programs?
- What best practices from other regions can be adopted to reduce racial disparities in arrests?
- How can we measure the long-term impact of police reforms on arrest rates and community trust?
- What is the nature of the arrests? Are most arrests from the town where the statistic was taken or from outside of the town? (do towns with big highway systems have more statistics?) What do we make of the increasing number of “race unknown” stats?

Conclusion

It was HUC’s goal to write this report to spark conversation in Hingham and neighboring towns to change policy and incite tangible changes within our community. The data found significant racial disparities in home mortgages, student discipline, school representation, and arrest records across the South Shore. There are some years and towns with positive trends, but the overall data shows persistent disparities that highlight systemic challenges for people of color and emphasize the necessity for targeted initiatives to improve diversity, representation, and equitable treatment in these communities.

Despite some positive trends and efforts to promote inclusivity, systemic challenges persist. The findings emphasize the urgent need for targeted initiatives to foster diversity, equity, and inclusivity across the South Shore. By providing data-driven insights, this report aims to inspire an increase in community engagement and to incite actionable policy recommendations that will make a tangible change. By addressing these issues holistically, we can work towards a more equitable and inclusive community, ensuring fair treatment and opportunities for all residents of the South Shore.

Acknowledgments:

This report used the toolkit from Reparations for Melrose, which can be found at:

<https://reparationsformelrose.org>.

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