

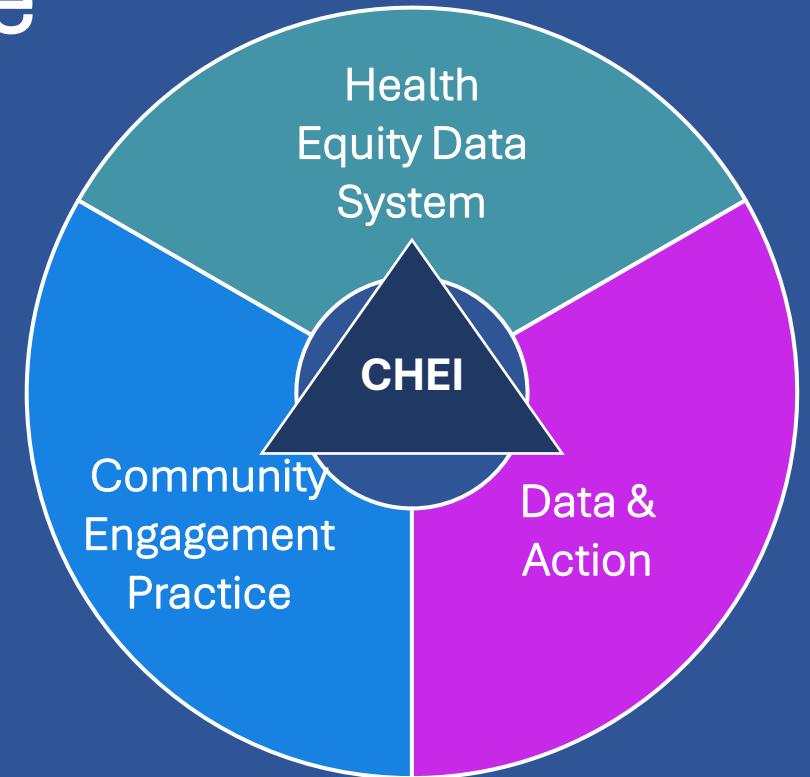


# Massachusetts Department of Public Health

## Community Health Equity Initiative (CHEI)

Community Health Equity Survey 2023  
Housing Spotlight

Part 4: Drivers of Housing Inequities  
Housing Systems and Policies



# Contents



## Part 4: Drivers of Housing and Health

Part 4 of the 2023 CHES Housing Spotlight showcases findings from the 2023 CHES that connect data on housing and various drivers of health inequities.

This slide deck is meant to be viewed after you have read through Part 1 through Part 3 of the Housing Spotlight. To access the entire spotlight and the full mental health report, please visit the 2023 CHES Housing Spotlight page on [CHEI Topic and Community Spotlights | Mass.gov](#).

Part 1: Community Health Equity Initiative Overview

Part 2: Housing in Massachusetts: Equity Framing and Data Overview

Part 3: Inequities in Housing

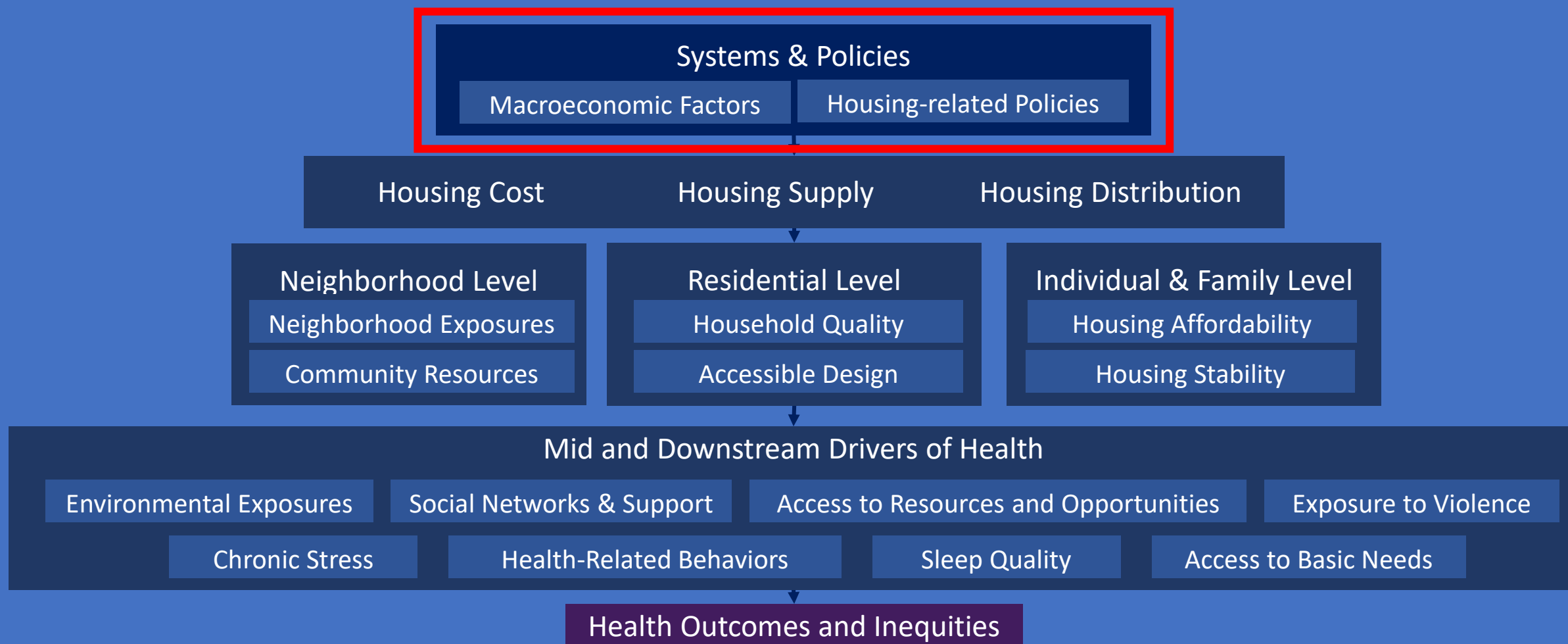
**Part 4: Drivers of Housing and Health**

Part 5: Housing and Health Outcomes

Part 6: Promoting Healthy Housing: Areas of Action to Address Root Causes of Inequities

# Drivers of Housing and Health

# Housing Systems & Policies



# Housing Systems & Policies



Systems and policies drive inequities in housing and health

Federal, state, and local housing regulations and policies shape the overall housing landscape. They influence the cost, supply, distribution, design, and quality of homes.

Housing and economic systems and policies can create advantages for some and disadvantages for others. This can lead to inequitable access to safe, affordable housing and chances to build wealth over generations.<sup>1</sup>

Housing systems and policies can also be used to address the impact of historical disadvantages. However, some residents face barriers in accessing housing programs.

# Housing Systems & Policies



Systems and policies can address inequities caused by systemic racism

Housing systems and policies contribute to housing inequities but can also be used to address them. Below are three programs available in Massachusetts for those disproportionately affected by historically unjust systems and policies.

## Emergency Assistance Program

The [MA Emergency Housing Assistance Program](#) provides emergency housing for all individuals, including pregnant people, families with children under 21; young adult emergency housing; and resources for youth experiencing homelessness.<sup>20</sup>

## Family self-sufficiency programs

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Conditions program links [Housing Choice Voucher Program](#) (Section 8 Housing) recipients to resources for employment, education, or training to increase economic stability.<sup>21</sup>

## Eviction Assistance and Mediation

[Legal help and mediation](#) are available statewide for both low-income and owner-occupants. Lawyers can advise individuals of their rights, file court papers, respond to court deadlines, and prepare mediation.<sup>22</sup>

# Housing Systems & Policies



## Systemic barriers to housing support must also be addressed

Complicated eligibility rules, along with limited funding and staff at local housing agencies responsible for reviewing applications, can lead to long waitlists for housing support.<sup>23</sup>

Among respondents who reported worry about losing housing, key themes around accessing benefits arose, including:

- Long wait times for affordable housing, and
- Eligibility requirements that do not reflect the high cost of living.

*“Waiting lists for affordable housing are approx. 4 years long.”*

*“they say I make too much for help, but they only look at rent, not other things you may need like, meds, food, clothing, transportation, phone, internet, and the list goes on. I work, but I need help too.”*

# Housing Systems & Policies



## Certain groups in urgent need of housing support reported barriers to access

In qualitative analyses, **parents under 25** identified **barriers to accessing housing assistance**, such as strict income eligibility requirements, unclear or inconsistent eligibility determinations, and long waitlists. When looking for housing, parents experienced multi-year waitlists for public housing and Section 8, difficulty with credit checks, security deposits, and demonstrating rental histories or adequate income. On top of these barriers, access could hinge on the landlord's willingness to rent to young people or accept Section 8.

**Survivors of intimate partner violence** also expressed **not being aware of housing resources** available to them.

*"...It took literally the whole 8 months of my pregnancy to try to get into a shelter with my husband, 'cause they wanted to separate us and there was no way that they could get us into a shelter together without him being under my cash case or us being married. So we did both. And I also started working...And even with that income that I had with the income that I have from DTA and my husband we still didn't qualify for an apartment."*

*"... It kind of all depends on who you have for a landlord. I know some landlords don't accept Section 8, some of them do. Some of them accept the housing vouchers, and some of them don't."*

*"I didn't know that there was domestic violence shelters...Had I known that, I probably would have gone to one a lot sooner. You know, from where I'm from...eventually I heard about the [domestic violence center], but I never knew about the help that they had."*



# References

20. *Emergency Housing Assistance* (2025). Mass.gov. <https://www.mass.gov/emergency-housing-assistance>
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23. Wallack, T., & Willmsen, C. (2023, September 19). *Massachusetts Has a Huge Waitlist for State-Funded Housing. So Why Are 2,300 Units Vacant?* ProPublica. <https://www.propublica.org/article/massachusetts-public-housing-units-vacant-despite-waitlists>