



BUREAU UPDATE: MASS. EXODUS FROM CIVIL SERVICE

IN SEPTEMBER 2024, the Bureau released *Mass. Exodus from Civil Service*, a report analyzing the City's petition to remove Worcester Police Department's (WPD) Chief of Police and Deputy Chief positions from civil service. Since then, a new economic development bill signed into law by the Governor has significantly changed civil service hiring processes for departments across the Commonwealth.

This update outlines those changes and their effects on police and fire departments, including the state's approval of Worcester's petition to exempt WPD's Chief and deputies from civil service. This effectively ended a separate Civil Service Commission (CSC) investigation into

allegations that the City violated the rights of three WPD deputies to be considered for the Chief of Police position, which has yet to be permanently filled.

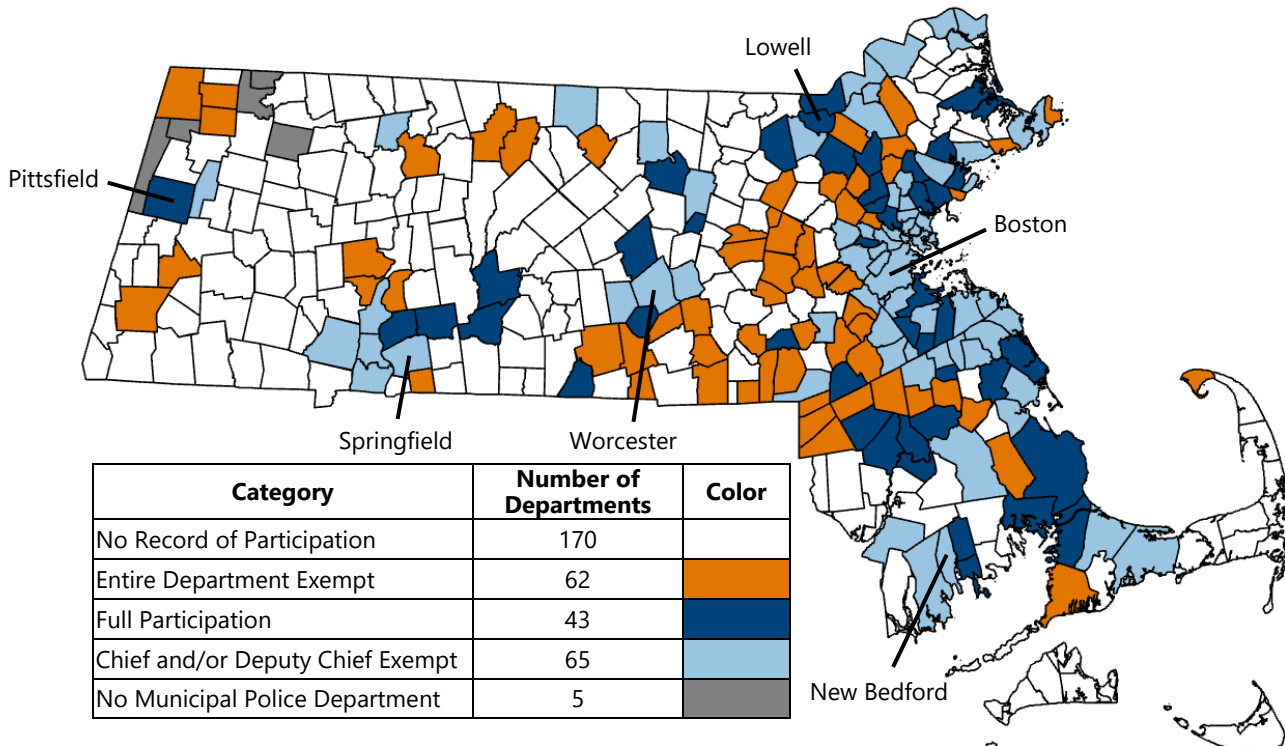
With both positions set to be removed from civil service on March 1, the City Manager will have an opportunity to set a precedent for how WPD's leadership will be appointed. The Bureau examines how findings from the DOJ investigation and the adoption of a transparent, merit-based selection process could ensure accountability within WPD. Additionally, the Bureau explores how utilizing the new state civil service laws, along with existing civil service laws, could help close WPD's diversity gap.

On November 20, 2024, the Governor signed *An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts' Economic Leadership*, into law. Otherwise known as the Mass Leads Act, this law primarily focuses on incentives for life science and clean technology industries. However, the law also introduced significant changes to Chapter 31, which governs Massachusetts' civil service system. One provision approved home rule petitions from municipalities requesting exemptions from civil service, provided the petitions were filed between January 4, 2023, and July 31, 2024.

As a result, 24 municipalities will have some or all positions in their police or fire departments exempted from civil service. In Worcester County, Charlton, Gardner, Millbury, and Oxford will exempt their entire police departments; Leicester will exempt its Chief; and Worcester will exempt its Chief and deputy chiefs.

The Bureau has updated its map of municipal police department participation in civil service to reflect the most recently exempted positions. This update is based on data from the Massachusetts Human Resources Division (HRD) and additional research conducted by the Bureau to verify

Municipal Police Departments by Positions Participating in Civil Service Hiring (After Mass Leads Act)





participation as accurately as possible.

To complete the exemption process, municipalities must submit a letter confirming their intent to the Chief Human Resources Officer of the Massachusetts Human Resources Division (HRD), the Joint Committee on Public Service, and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) by February 15, 2025. The exemptions will take effect on March 1, 2025. On November 21, 2024, one day after the bill was signed into law, Worcester's City Manager and provisionally appointed Chief of Police submitted the required documentation.

The state's approval of Worcester's home rule petition effectively terminated the CSC's investigation into the City of Worcester, which was initiated by a complaint from three deputy police chiefs. The complaint alleged that the City violated the civil service rights of the deputies by failing to consider them for the Chief of Police position, which has been filled provisionally for over one year. The City countered that there was no explicit limit on how long provisional appointments could be held.

On November 27, 2024, the City requested that the CSC close the investigation, arguing that the state's approval of the home rule petition had made it moot. Essentially, because the Chief and Deputy Chief positions will no longer be covered by civil service laws, the investigation into whether the city denied the deputies an opportunity to be considered for the position may no longer be relevant.

The deputies made three counterarguments in response to

the request. First, they contended that the City had been in violation of civil service laws for several months. Second, they argued that the City filed a new version of its home rule petition after the legislatively established approval window had closed, rendering the original filing date invalid. This suggested the issue was not moot, as the Chief of Police and deputies would not be exempt from civil service, thus warranting the continuation of the investigation. Finally, the deputies maintained that the investigation was of public importance, as it could determine whether the City had violated the law, as well as allow the deputies to seek recourse through other avenues.

The CSC voted to close the investigation on December 19, 2024, after considering both sides of the investigation. CSC Chair Christopher Bowman clarified that amending the original home rule petition did not change its original filing date. He further stated that after considering the deputies' arguments, he was not persuaded it was in the best interest of the deputies, the City, or the civil service system to continue investigating a violation related to a position recently exempted by law. Interestingly, Bowman noted that the City justified its intention to exempt the Chief from civil service to expand its ability to hire police leadership from a more diverse applicant pool. He added, "While the commission has been divested of jurisdiction over the Police Chief position, I nonetheless encourage the City to honor that noble commitment."

DECENTRALIZING AND STREAMLINING CIVIL SERVICE HIRING FOR POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENTS

The Mass Leads Act not only exempts positions from civil service but also introduces significant changes to civil service hiring practices. Proponents argue that these changes will improve the hiring process by streamlining administrative procedures and offering municipalities more flexibility in staffing police and fire departments.

ALTERNATIVE HIRING PATHWAY 1: LOCAL REGISTERS

In response to municipal concerns about HRD's slow hiring timelines, the law creates two alternative pathways for municipalities, reducing reliance on HRD's civil service entry-level examinations.

The first method involves creating a local register of candidates, a list compiled by municipal hiring authorities using their own criteria and processes, in contrast to the traditional HRD process, where lists are generated based on civil service entry-level examination scores. To establish a local register, a municipal hiring authority must enter into an agreement with HRD to ensure compliance with

"basic merit principles". The authority must also commit to recruiting diverse candidates and submit anti-nepotism, anti-patronage, and anti-favoritism policies that HRD finds acceptable.

In addition to meeting the required age, health, and fitness standards, candidates on local registers must also fulfill specific educational or training requirements to be appointed to a permanent civil service position. There are various ways to meet these requirements for police officers, including:

- Recently graduating from a police academy,
- Completing an approved police academy course,
- Holding certification as a salaried officer in another police department, or
- Passing a qualifying exam.

A qualifying exam is a traditional civil service exam administered by HRD, a locally designed exam validated



by a test-development expert, or an alternative exam approved by HRD in consultation with subject matter experts.

Firefighters must also meet rigorous training and certification standards. Candidates eligible for a local register must be recent or pending fire academy graduates or already certified as salaried officers in another department.

After these requirements are satisfied, HRD will authorize the candidate's employment, and the candidate must then complete the required courses at a police or fire academy.

ALTERNATIVE HIRING PATHWAY 2: POLICE AND FIRE CADET PROGRAMS

The second method municipalities can use to fill up to 50% of police and fire department hires is through cadet programs. These two-year programs are designed to provide prospective officers with valuable on-the-job experience by assigning them to various units. Several cities and towns, including Boston, Worcester, and Springfield, offer these programs.

Under the previous requirements, cadets had to pass a competitive civil service exam in order to be hired as a full-time officer after completing the program. Eligibility was restricted to citizen residents of the municipality offering the program, with age requirements ranging from 18 to 23.

The new law allows police cadet programs to lead directly to civil service tenure without the need for a traditional civil service exam. The cadet program must comply with "basic merit principles" and be approved by HRD and the [Municipal Police Training Committee \(MPTC\)](#). Cadets are required to pass a qualifying exam, but residency requirements and the maximum age limit have been eliminated. As before, cadet service counts as creditable for retirement purposes if the cadet is hired as a full-time police officer and contributes to the annuity savings fund as determined by the retirement board.

To maintain their status, cadets must also remain in good standing for at least 12 months, as required by HRD. Upon completing the program and graduating from an MPTC-approved academy, they may be appointed to the permanent police force, where they will serve a probationary period before gaining tenure.

Municipalities may also utilize fire cadet programs, which allow candidates who complete at least 24 months of service as a fire cadet to be appointed to fill a vacancy in the lowest grade of a fire department without the need for certification from an eligible list. The program must be approved by both the HRD and the [Massachusetts Fire Training Council](#). Fire cadets must either be on a fire

entrance eligible list or pass another qualifying exam approved by HRD.

These two alternative hiring pathways can be used, either together or separately, for up to 50% of new hires in police and fire departments, with the remaining 50% hired through traditional civil service pathways. This provides municipalities with a more locally tailored route to civil service employment, potentially improving efficiency in addressing staffing concerns. Supporters of the cadet programs argue that they attract a more diverse pool of candidates compared to traditional civil service hiring methods and the departments that offer them, making them a valuable tool for promoting more representative departments.

The police cadet program is permanent, the fire cadet program is set to expire in 2035.

INCREASES HIRING FORMULA FOR TRADITIONAL CIVIL SERVICE HIRING PATHWAY

Under the previous system, municipalities filled vacancies by selecting from a candidate pool determined by HRD using the "2n+1" formula, where n is the number of vacancies. For example, with two vacancies, five candidates from the total pool of applicants would be considered.

The new system increases the formula to "3n+1," allowing municipalities to select from a larger pool of candidates on the HRD entry-level exam list. For example, in January 2024, WPD reported 46 vacancies. Assuming, for illustrative purposes, that the number of vacancies remains the same and all are for positions at the lowest grade level, the City would be able to consider 139 candidates under the 3n+1 formula, compared to 93 under the 2n+1 formula. Furthermore, if the City opts to utilize the alternative hiring pathways to fill 50% of vacancies, the City could select from 70 candidates, compared to just 47 under the 2n+1 rule.

This provides more flexibility in addressing staffing shortages.

EXPANDS RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Under the previous law, candidates who had lived in the municipality for at least one year prior to the examination date were given priority on the eligible list. The new law expands this priority to include applicants who earned a high school diploma from a public school in the municipality or who were residents of the municipality while earning their diploma. This change acknowledges that there are multiple criteria by which a candidate may demonstrate familiarity with the community that they intend to work for as police officers or firefighters.

The law also introduces provisions for regional residency preferences, specifically aimed at addressing recruitment challenges in smaller municipalities. Cities and towns with



populations under 75,000 may request that candidates residing within 10 miles of their boundaries be prioritized on the eligible list over non-regional applicants. Municipalities also retain the ability to extend this 10-mile limit through collective bargaining agreements. For larger municipalities, such as Worcester, with populations exceeding 75,000, the law allows for collaboration with neighboring municipalities to create shared residency preferences, provided there is mutual agreement and approval from both jurisdictions' legislative bodies. While this may not be beneficial for large urban departments, which could risk reducing diversity and prioritizing residents who are familiar with local communities, it expands the candidate pool and fosters cooperation among municipalities.

Post-appointment residency requirements remain the same: civil service appointees must establish residence within the city or town, or within 10 miles, within nine months. Municipalities can extend this limit through collective bargaining agreements.

All changes to the residency requirements will take effect on November 20, 2025, one year after the Mass Leads Act's effective date.

ESTABLISHES A STATE COMMISSION ON RECRUITMENT AND A DEI POSITION WITHIN HRD

A permanent Commission on Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention of Municipal Police Officers and Firefighters will be formed and tasked with improving relevant efforts for the police officers and firefighters across Massachusetts. The Commission will be co-chaired by members appointed by the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, and the Governor. In addition, the Commission will include

legislators, police and fire unions, human rights and advocacy groups, veterans' affairs organizations, municipal representatives, and state agencies and legal representatives.

The Commission will provide guidance to enhance the diversity and quality of police and fire candidates. It will use research and data to inform initiatives and policies aimed at improving recruitment and addressing gaps in hiring practices. Additionally, the Commission will recommend measures to increase the representation of historically underrepresented groups, such as women and people of color.

The state also created a new position within HRD's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEO), which will support these efforts. The Manager of Civil Service Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will lead initiatives focused on police and fire department employment in both civil service and non-civil service municipalities.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

These changes to civil service hiring, including local registers, cadet programs, and expanded residency preferences, provide municipalities with greater control over recruitment and hiring, aiming to address staffing shortages. However, challenges persist in creating diverse and representative police departments, especially in cities like Worcester. It is important to note that these changes apply only to new hires, not to promotions under civil service. While the state's new commission and HRD's DEI manager will help facilitate these efforts, maintaining the balance between efficiency, fairness, and diversity in the recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices remains a significant challenge for police and fire departments across the Commonwealth.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY AND EQUITY WITHIN WPD

In *Mass. Exodus from Civil Service*, the Bureau examined the various challenges faced by police departments across the country, including recruitment and retention difficulties, the adoption of alternative approaches to policing, concerns over officer wellness and high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicide, and legal and social scrutiny. In addition to these issues, the Bureau highlighted the importance of representation and diversity within police departments, exploring how this challenge is particularly salient within WPD.

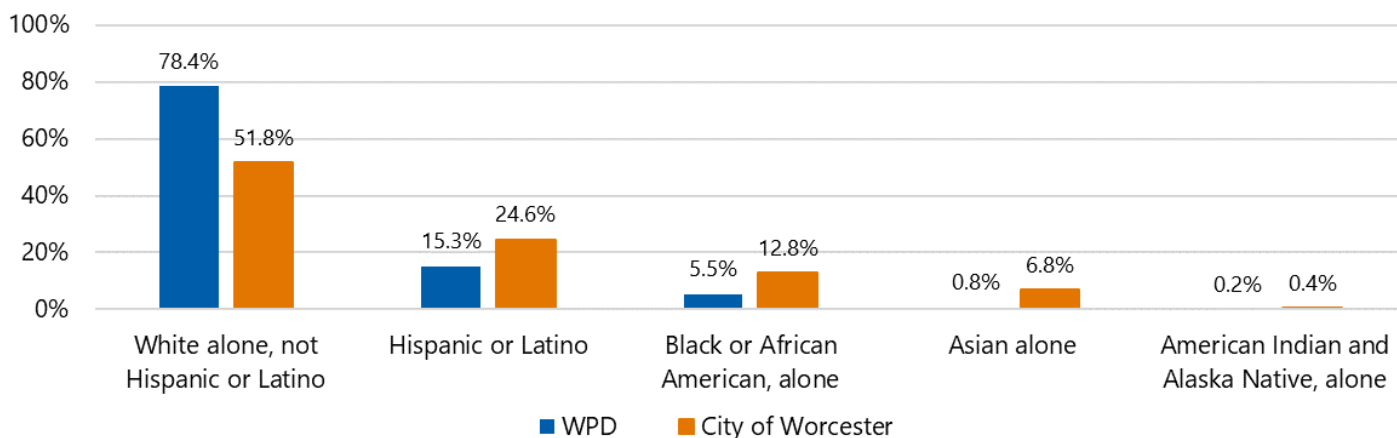
Chart 1 shows that White officers in WPD overrepresent the city's White population by 27%, while Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations are underrepresented by 9%, 7%, and 6%, respectively.

The diversity gap within WPD's leadership is even more pronounced, as illustrated in Chart 2. Between 2017 and 2022, of the 49 promotions made within the department, 43 (88%) were awarded to White officers, while Black and Hispanic officers each received only three promotions. Notably, in 2019 and 2020, all 17 promotions were given to White officers.

The Racial Equity Audit of WPD and the City Manager's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC) both recommended that the City consider leaving civil service, due to barriers to diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring and promotion practices.

After the City Council unanimously approved the City's home rule petition to exempt the Chief and Deputy Chief positions from civil service, the City Manager, Mayor, and

Chart 1: Racial and Ethnic Composition of the City of Worcester and WPD

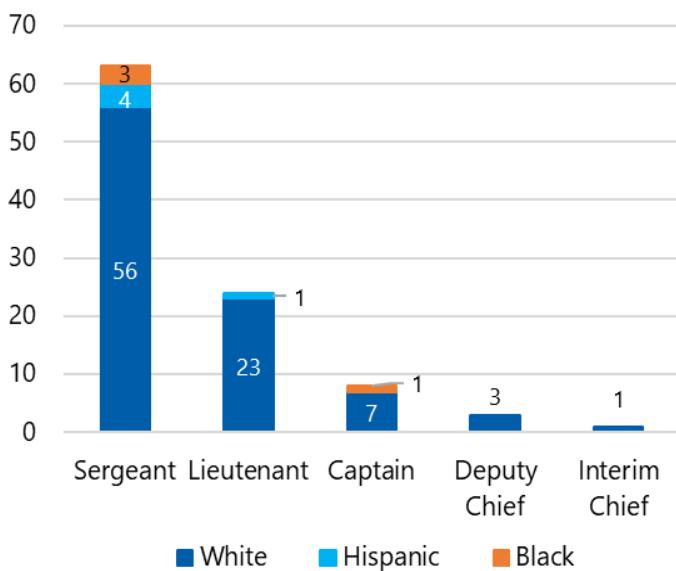


Sources: American Community Survey's 5-Year Estimates (2022), Racial Equity Audit of WPD (2023)

City Council Vice Chair submitted written testimony to the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Public Service in support of the petition. They advocated that this move would promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within WPD.

While exempting positions or an entire department from civil service may create more opportunities for a diverse pool of candidates, City leaders and the general public may not be aware that both previous and current civil service laws offer existing methods to promote diversity within the department. These options have been available for decades, but some departments either lack awareness of them or actively resist implementing them.

Chart 2: Racial and Ethnic Composition of WPD Supervisors



Sources: American Community Survey's 5-Year Estimates (2022), Racial Equity Audit of WPD (2023)

This view likely stems from a recent court case, settled in 2023, that found Massachusetts' civil service promotional exam for police sergeants disproportionately disadvantaged Black and Latino officers due to biased and outdated testing methods. (*Tatum et al v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts*). As a result, HRD is revising this exam to address these disparities. However, this finding does not impact chiefs or deputy chiefs of police, as they are evaluated using different examination methods.

For example, [HRD's Personnel Administration Rule 10 \(PAR 10\)](#) allows municipalities to hire from two different candidate lists instead of relying solely on the traditional eligible list, which ranks candidates based on exam scores and statutory preferences. The traditional rank-order system can sometimes result in disproportionately fewer non-White hires, which can hinder diversity in the hiring and promotion process.

Under PAR 10, municipalities can request that candidates who are classified as "disadvantaged persons" under Massachusetts law or as part of a "protected group" under federal law be placed on an alternative list. With HRD's approval, municipalities can then fill vacancies by selecting an equal number of candidates from both the traditional list (ranked by exam scores) and the alternative list (ranked by a combination of exam scores and disadvantaged status), as long as all candidates have passed the exam. **This rule helps municipalities address disparities between the exam scores of Black or Latino applicants and their White counterparts, promoting a more diverse hiring process.**

The City of Worcester has never used PAR 10 for police hires or promotions, despite a 1998 agreement with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) requiring its use, along with other methods, to diversify the police department. No officers of color were promoted between the mid-1980s and 2001.



In 1994, two Black officers filed discrimination complaints after being passed over for sergeant promotions, leading to a 27-year legal battle with the City. In the 2010s, MCAD determined that the City's refusal to use PAR 10 and its reasoning for doing so violated the officers' rights to equal protection under the law through disparate treatment and disparate impact theories of discrimination. The Worcester Superior Court upheld these findings in 2021. The case was ultimately settled for \$1.5 million, with the City committing to non-discrimination in its employment practices. For more details on this history, refer to the Appendix.

Another potential, though indirect method to diversify civil service departments is through [Chapter 31 § Section 11](#), which allows municipalities to make promotional appointments through a competitive examination that is open to candidates from across Massachusetts. **Civil service does not require that promotions be made within the same departments, although it is often administered this way.**

Eligible candidates must have been employed for at least six months prior to the examination date in a civil service title that is deemed eligible by HRD.

While City leaders have argued that exempting the Chief and Deputy Chief positions, and others have suggested removing the entire department from civil service, would enhance diversity, the City has never used PAR 10 or Section 11 to explore opportunities for diversifying the department under civil service. Given this inconsistency, the City Manager should ensure that hiring and promotional decisions at all levels of WPD balance the goals of administrative efficiency, flexibility, and promoting diversity.

THE END OF CONSENT DECREES FOR HIRING IN MASSACHUSETTS POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Since the 1970s, WPD and many other police departments across Massachusetts had been under consent decrees agreed upon in [Castro v. Beecher](#). This landmark case, decided by the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts in 1972, addressed racial discrimination in civil service hiring practices for police departments. There was a nearly identical case, [NAACP v. Beecher](#), which applied to fire departments.

The court found that civil service exams used for police hiring were discriminatory, disproportionately excluding Black and Latino candidates. The court ruled that the tests were not valid indicators of job performance and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. As a result, the court mandated affirmative action measures, requiring the prioritization of "minority" candidates in hiring and promotions until department demographics reached "parity". Requirements of the consent decrees to reach this goal included:

- Prohibiting the use of any entrance exams with an adverse impact on "minority" candidates unless validated according to the standards set by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).
- Mandating that entrance exams be directly related to job requirements; selection tests and standards must align with EEOC guidelines.
- Requiring frequent administration of entrance exams to ensure an adequate and continuous pool of qualified minority candidates.
- Requiring certification ratios to include minority candidates, ensuring fair representation within the hiring process.
- Mandating written justification for bypassing a candidate, ensuring the reasons are job-related.
- Prohibiting unnecessarily high examination standards that exceed effective job performance requirements.
- Mandating recruitment initiatives aimed at increasing the number of minority candidates and requiring proactive outreach efforts.
- Applying these requirements to over 100 Massachusetts municipalities with a minority population of at least 1%.

According to a 2024 report by The Brattle Group, [An Analysis of Consent Decrees and Police Diversity in Massachusetts](#), **more than 100 police and fire departments, including WPD, were placed under either the Castro or NAACP consent decrees.**

Requests for exemption from the consent decree are sent to HRD, which reviews the parity of sworn officers (of any rank) to the municipal population. **By 2024, all police and fire departments were released from their consent decrees for having reached rough parity.**

On July 22, 2022, HRD notified the City of Worcester that the modified consent decree would release WPD for having "substantially achieved the benchmark for rough parity." HRD cited that between 2016 and 2021, the share of "minority" (Black and Hispanic) officers in the department rose from 20.4% to 23.4%, with the court's parity benchmark at 25.6%. The Racial Equity Audit, based on 2022 data (which may reflect a different point in time), showed that approximately 20.8% of officers were Black or Hispanic, and 21.6% were non-White overall.

Map 2 shows police departments across Massachusetts, primarily from metropolitan areas and cities with dense, diverse populations, that had their Castro Decrees lifted. The departments are organized according to the exemption period.

Brattle analyzed the parity between these departments and the jurisdictions they serve. However, due to the lack of available data on departments exempted by 2002 and in 2024, Brattle’s analysis only includes departments exempted before the 2000s, the early 2000s, and from 2017 to 2022.

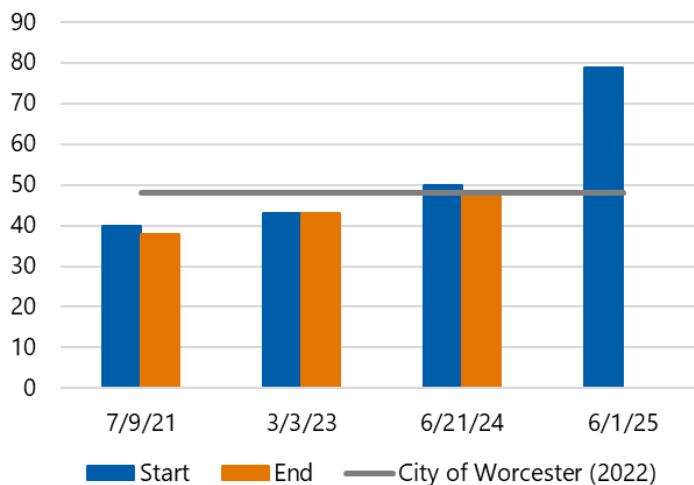
Across these three groups, Brattle found that Black and Hispanic officers are underrepresented compared to their municipal populations. Departments exempted in the early 2000s show the best results, followed by those exempted from 2017 to 2022. **Departments exempted before 2000 have the lowest parity, reflecting the longest time without the decree's influence (Page 27, Figure 4 of report).** These trends may suggest that the Castro Decree contributed to improving diversity.

Post-exemption data reveals mixed outcomes, but the researchers caution that without the Castro Decree, or other formal policies to promote diversity in hiring, backsliding—a decline in diversity efforts—can occur, as seen in Boston, Lowell, and New Bedford.

Since 2021, the WPD Academy classes have become more diverse, with each class better reflecting the city's demographics. Recruits who enter the academy are selected from the City's eligible list under civil service and are required to complete training at a Massachusetts police academy before being hired as full-time officers. While the 2021 class was disproportionately White compared to the

city’s share of White residents, the 2023 and 2024 classes aligned more closely with Worcester’s population. The 2025 class, which began on January 13, continues this trend, with nearly 80% of recruits being non-White. While this may change slightly by graduation, these figures demonstrate that the City's recruits and hires have become increasingly diverse.

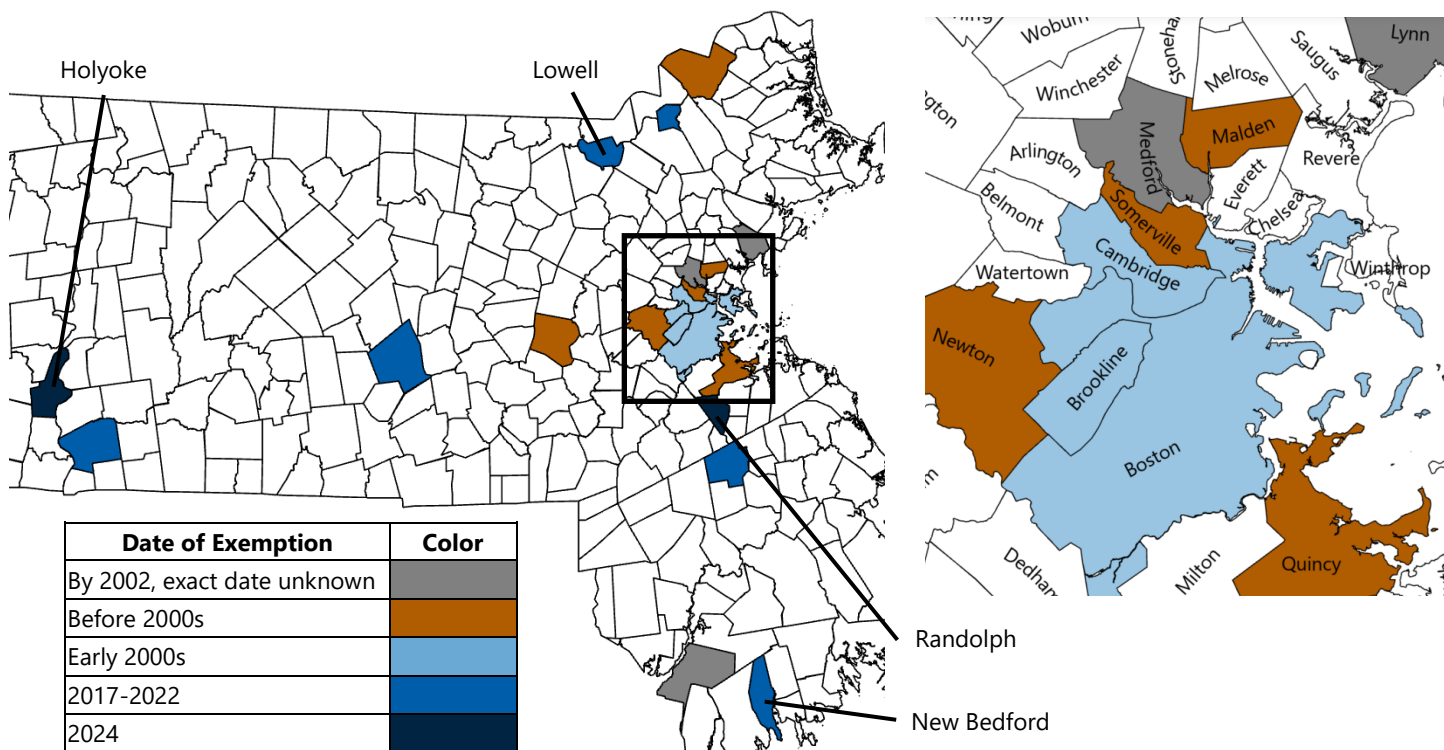
Chart 3: Share of Non-White WPD Academy Recruits from Start to Graduation



Source: City of Worcester’s Human Resources Department

*Dates reflect academy graduation dates. The City’s 2022 share refers to the ACS 2022 5-Year Estimate, which is consistent with the data used in Chart 1.

Map 2: Massachusetts City Police Departments Exempted from the Castro Decree by Exemption Period





While these developments show progress, it is crucial to ensure long-term equitable representation within WPD, alongside a focus on merit. The City Manager can achieve this by using PAR 10 for hiring and promotion decisions in civil service roles and ensuring a diverse candidate pool for leadership positions outside civil service. These steps will help prioritize both diversity and merit in the department's leadership.

However, implementing these changes requires understanding the constraints and opportunities within current collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) to effectively align with diversity and merit goals.

THE IMPACT OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS

CBAs and past practices can significantly shape the hiring and promotion procedures within police departments. The CBA between patrol officers (Local 911 NEPBA) and the City does not outline exactly how officers will be hired (within the City's discretion). It did require, however, that the City and patrol union form a study committee to review removing the department from civil service. The exact nature of the study committee's work or results is unclear, and with the state's recent changes to civil service hiring procedures, it is also uncertain if the state would approve any more requests to exempt departments from civil service until the new system has been evaluated. The patrol union contract will expire on June 30, 2025.

CONCLUSION

On March 1, 2025, the City will have the unique opportunity to establish a precedent for hiring police chiefs and deputy chiefs, when the positions are no longer covered by civil service. **The Bureau recommended in *Mass. Exodus from Civil Service* that the City Manager implement a clear, merit-based process for appointing individuals to leadership roles to promote good governance.** This process should be impartial, free from bias, and safeguarded against favoritism or political influence—issues civil service was designed to address. Candidates should be evaluated based on their qualifications and leadership ability, rather than incumbency or tenure, ensuring that the most qualified individuals are chosen to lead the department.

Since the release of the report, the Department of Justice (DOJ) findings on systemic misconduct within the WPD have made the need for strong, accountable leadership even more pressing. The DOJ investigation uncovered disturbing patterns of excessive force, including the use of tasers, head and face strikes, and police dogs against detained or non-resisting individuals. The report also

The most recent CBA between Local 504 IBPO (the union representing sergeants, lieutenants, and captains) and the City also does not outline a specific process for how promotions will be granted, instead focusing on the salary implications and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) contributions for promoted officers. This contract was signed on September 9, 2024, and will expire in 2026.

Outside of formal agreements, unions often voice strong objections to changes they perceive as conflicting with their members' interests. For instance, the supervisors' union publicly objected to the City's home rule petition to remove the Chief and Deputy Chief positions from civil service, arguing that civil service provides a fair process for hiring, promotions, and discipline-related matters (Petrishen, 2024).

Whether through CBAs or using political influence, anticipating union objections to changes in hiring and promotion practices for WPD officers will be critical to implementing any reforms. This consideration applies not only to the use of PAR 10 but also to determining the share of new hires—up to 50%—that the City chooses to recruit through the newly allowed state pathways. Additionally, deciding whether to establish a cadet program, utilize the local register method, or implement both will require careful planning and consideration.

documented patterns of sexual assault and misconduct by officers, particularly against women in the commercial sex trade during sting operations and under the threat of arrest.

Additionally, the DOJ found that WPD supervisors and WPD's Bureau of Professional Standards (BOPS) often dismissed complaints with insufficient investigations.

In light of these findings, the Bureau recommends that the City add additional criteria when evaluating candidates for the Chief and Deputy Chief positions, specifically their ability to address these issues and lead necessary reforms within the department.

The City's initial response to the DOJ report was conveyed by a lawyer representing the City, who described the report as "unfair, inaccurate, and biased" (Petrishen, 2024). Worcester's police unions also criticized the report and denied its findings (Caushi, 2024; Petrishen, 2024).

The findings prompted a stark divide amongst city residents. On December 17, during a Worcester City



Council meeting, a large group of police officers and their supporters vocally rejected the DOJ's report, offering enthusiastic applause for those who criticized it. Concerned and outraged residents, along with local activists, also attended, expressing a range of concerns about WPD and the findings detailed in the report. Two days later, the DOJ held a community meeting at the YWCA to gather input on what actions the City and WPD should take to address the findings.

The City Manager characterized the findings as "shocking and unacceptable," underscoring the seriousness of the report. He outlined actions being taken by the Executive Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (EODEI), including implementing training initiatives, establishing a hotline for reporting misconduct, and considering the creation of a civilian review board to improve police accountability. The City Manager also reaffirmed the administration's commitment to enacting necessary changes, ensuring accountability, and instituting policies to prevent future misconduct.

The City Manager also announced a new DEI-focused curriculum for the WPD Academy, one of several academies authorized by the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) in Massachusetts. It provides the required entry-level training for recruits seeking to become municipal police officers. The City is requiring that new officers be educated on the "history and evolution of policing, its impact on marginalized communities, mitigating bias, and fostering community engagement." The program is facilitated by the Chief Equity Officer and instructed by WPD officers and certified academy instructors. After graduation, officers will continue to receive DEI-informed training and follow-up resources. The City Manager called this one of many initiatives designed to "ensure that the police department continues to equitably serve its residents" while adapting to the changing needs of the community ([City of Worcester, 2025](#)).

Following the City Manager's actions to address the findings, and with more likely to follow, the Trump Administration recently halted consent decrees for police departments that were recently under DOJ investigation ([Richer, 2025](#)). This shift may reduce the likelihood of federal interventions in departments across the country, including WPD. In light of this uncertainty, the City should continue to use its discretion and available resources to make the necessary changes, even in the absence of federal intervention.

Beyond the appointment of WPD's top leaders, Worcester's City Manager and Chief Human Resources Officer should utilize the state's new hiring framework to maximize efficiency and flexibility, while also leveraging underutilized opportunities to advance the diversity of hires

and promotions within WPD. This process should also be informed by the **City Council**, the newly appointed **Chief Equity Officer**, and the next permanent **Chief of Police**.

The City, in its ongoing effort to address the DOJ and Racial Equity Audit findings, should prioritize advancing diversity within the police department through stronger hiring and promotion practices. This can be achieved by:

- **Developing a clear, merit-based process** for selecting chiefs and deputy chiefs within WPD, informed in part by candidates' ability to address the issues raised in the **DOJ report** and lead necessary reforms.
- Requesting the Massachusetts HRD to **implement PAR 10** to ensure that candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds or protected groups are hired and promoted at an equal rate to non-disadvantaged groups. **This approach would maintain a merit-based approach while promoting diversity** in the workforce, especially following the end of the Castro Decree.
- Creating local registers and utilizing the City's cadet program for up to 50% of new civil service hires.
- Considering the use of the regional residency requirement, if necessary.
- Considering expanding the post-appointment residency requirement for civil service employees with police unions, if necessary.

While the focus of [Mass. Exodus from Civil Service](#) and this update has primarily been on WPD, the City should also consider whether these hiring and promotion practices should be applied to Worcester Fire Department. Collectively, these efforts can create more equitable, accountable, and diverse departments.



APPENDIX: BACKGROUND OF THE HIRING DISCRIMINATION CASE AND THE CITY'S RELUCTANCE TO USE PAR 10

In 1988, the City of Worcester and the Commission entered into an "Agreement Relative to Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action." The Agreement required the City to take "positive, aggressive measures" to ensure equal opportunity in various employment areas, including hiring, promotion, compensation, and training. It also stipulated that the City must adopt "departmental hiring goals" for minorities, consistent with affirmative action regulations, until parity was achieved. The included using HRD's PAR 10, and any other option reasonably designed to meet the goals of the agreement. The Agreement was set to expire in 1991 after an initial three-year period, and neither the Commission nor the City extended it.

However, out of 30 officers promoted to sergeant between 1992 and 1994, none were Black or Hispanic, and no "minority" officers, as the agreement phrased it, were promoted between the mid-1980s and May 2001.

In 1994, two Black officer passed over for promotions to sergeant filed a complaint with MCAD which led to a 27-year legal battle over whether the City of Worcester had discriminated against them.

MCAD found that "the determinative cause of the City's decision to forgo use or application for usage of the PAR 10 protocol in 1993, 1994, or 1995 to promote Harris or Tatum was impermissible racial bias". This is because the City was aware of the absence of "minority" supervisory officers and had not taken steps to remedy the discriminatory impact of its hiring and promotional practices. In 2006, the City defended its decision not to use PAR 10 by citing concerns over a potential reverse discrimination lawsuit from a police union and "morale among white officers." This reasoning, however, implied a discriminatory disregard for the morale of minority officers. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) ultimately rejected these justifications.

In 2021, Worcester Superior Court upheld MCAD's finding that the City discriminated against the officers through disparate treatment ([Tatum and Harris v. City of Worcester, 2011](#)) and disparate impact ([Tatum and Harris v. City of Worcester 2015](#)) theories of discrimination. The Superior Court's order and judgement can be searched for [here](#).

The City initially appealed the decision, the parties filed a stipulation for dismissal, which is when both parties in a lawsuit agree to dismiss a case. As a result, the orders resulting from MCAD's 2011 and 2015 decisions were voided, and the City said it will continue to ensure non-discrimination in employment practices through its Affirmative Action policy.

After the case was dismissed, it was widely reported that the City and plaintiffs reached a settlement for \$1.5 million. While officer Harris passed away in 2018, Tatum received sergeant status retirement benefits.



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