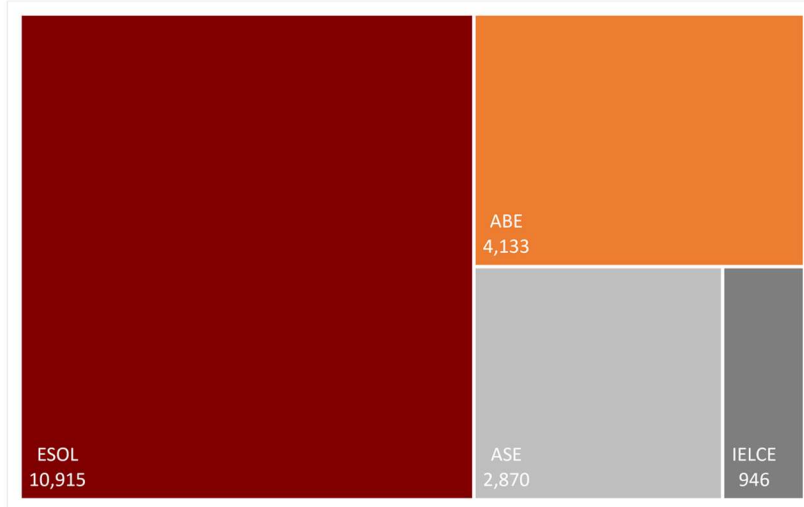


COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ADULT BASIC EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

What is adult basic education (ABE)?

Massachusetts' adult basic education (ABE) system is a critical element of the Commonwealth's efforts to ensure that every resident has the education he or she needs to realize his or her full potential and to

develop the type of workforce essential to a flourishing, innovative, and more equitable economy. Massachusetts' ABE system also contributes toward the achievement of a range of other public priorities, whether improved health outcomes, lower incarceration rates, or deeper civic engagement.



Composition of enrollment in state-funded ABE programs in Massachusetts, FY 2017

Source: US Department of Education, OCTAE

More generally, adult basic education is an umbrella term that includes instructional services for adults over the age of 16 in one of four areas: **adult basic education (ABE)**, that is, reading, writing, and math below the high school

level; **adult secondary education (ASE)**, leading to a high school equivalency credential; **English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**, and; **Integrated English Language and Civics Education (IELCE)**, which combines ESOL instruction with civics education and workforce preparation activities.

In addition to these core educational offerings, adult basic education programs provide a variety of related services, such as citizenship classes, employment and career readiness training, transitions to college, and family, financial, and health literacy assistance. In fiscal year 2017, 18,864 adult learners were enrolled in state-funded adult basic education programs in Massachusetts, with just under 22 percent participating in adult basic education, 15 percent engaged in adult secondary education, about 58 percent attending ESOL classes, and 5 percent involved in IELCE.

Who enrolls in ABE programs in Massachusetts?

The adults currently enrolled in state-funded ABE programs come from communities across the Commonwealth, determined to acquire the skills and the knowledge they need to build a better life for themselves and their families. The majority (56 percent) are between the ages of 25 and 44, though a

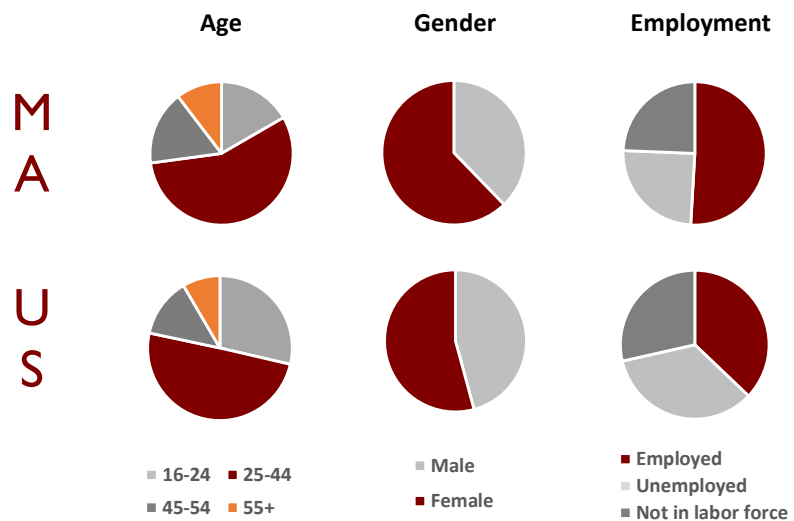


MCAE: The Voice of Adult Education in Massachusetts

For more on adult education in Massachusetts, including a list of sources for this fact sheet, please visit www.mcae.net.

617.482.6223 • info@mcae.net

significant proportion (17 percent) are somewhat older – between the ages of 45 and 54. Most adult students (62 percent) are women and a sizable share (19 percent) are single parents. Importantly, over half (51 percent) of all adult students in Massachusetts are currently employed, while another quarter are actively looking for work.



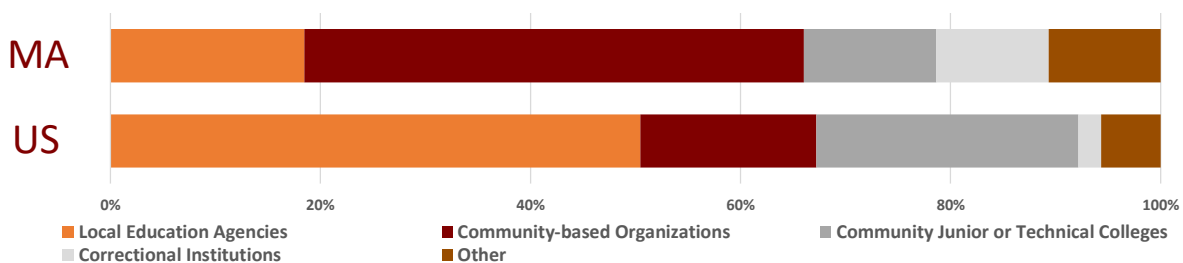
As the figure at right attests, compared to their counterparts across the United States, adult students in Massachusetts are generally older, are more likely to be female, and are more likely to hold a job.

Demographic composition of ABE students in Massachusetts and the United States as a whole, FY 2017

Source: US Department of Education, OCTAE

How is ABE delivered in Massachusetts?

One of the great strengths of Massachusetts’ ABE system is its diversity, as a wide array of entities are responsible for delivering such services. In FY 2017, 103 entities received public funding to provide adult



Composition of Adult Education Providers in Massachusetts and the United States as a whole, FY 2017

Source: US Department of Education, OCTAE

Note: "Other" includes libraries, four-year colleges and universities, faith-based organizations, and other institutions

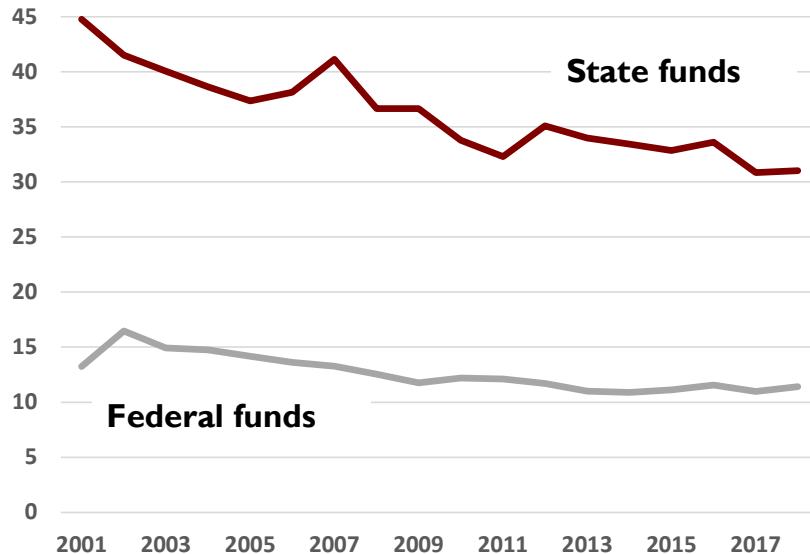
education services in Massachusetts. Community-based organizations comprised 48 percent of that total, while local education agencies, such as public-school districts, made up another 18 percent. Two- and four-year colleges, businesses, labor unions, and state and county correctional facilities also play a role in adult instruction in Massachusetts. Of note, of the 46 correctional institutions nationwide that offered some form of adult education in FY 2017, 11 were situated in the Commonwealth.

All told, federally- and state-funded adult education programs employ roughly 500 full-time administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, and teachers across the Commonwealth and employ almost 1,040 personnel part-time. They also attract over 1,500 volunteers each year. Of the more than 300 full-time teachers in the adult education workforce, close to two-thirds are certified in some fashion

– whether for K-12, ABE, or special education or for teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) – and nearly 80 percent have been in the field at least three years.

How is ABE financed in Massachusetts?

Adult basic education in Massachusetts is financed through a combination of federal and state funds, though the latter comprises the vast majority of such resources. For instance, for FY 2018, federal funds comprised about 27 percent of the resources available for adult education in Massachusetts, while state funds



Federal and state adult basic education funding in Massachusetts, 2001 - 2018

All figures are in millions of constant 2020 dollars; years are federal fiscal years for federal funds and state fiscal years for state funds.

Source: MCAE calculations based on data from US BLS, US DOE, and MassBudget

funds constituted the remaining 73 percent. Federal funds are authorized under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, one element of the broader Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, but still must be appropriated by federal budget writers each year. Likewise, state funds are allocated via line item 7035-0002 as part of each year's general appropriations act (or GAA).

Importantly, both sources of funds have declined considerably in real terms since the early 2000s. As the graphic above suggests, after adjusting for inflation, federal grants to

Massachusetts for adult education purposes dropped close to 14 percent between 2001 and 2018, mirroring the overall decline in federal support for adult education during that time frame. Over the same span, state support for ABE fell nearly 31 percent – from just under \$45 million in FY 2001 to \$31 million in FY 2018 (expressed in constant 2020 dollars).