

Evaluating Residents' Experiences with Tree Planting Programs in Worcester, MA

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Study Area and Past Replanting

The discovery of the invasive Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) in 2008 in the Greater Worcester Area necessitated the felling of over 30,000 trees as part of the eradication strategy. In response, a multi-agency reforestation effort involving the City of Worcester, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and Worcester Tree Initiative (WTI) began in 2010. Between Fall 2010 and Spring 2012, the Massachusetts DCR replanted over 17,000 trees in Worcester, Holden, Boylston, West Boylston, Auburn, and Shrewsbury.

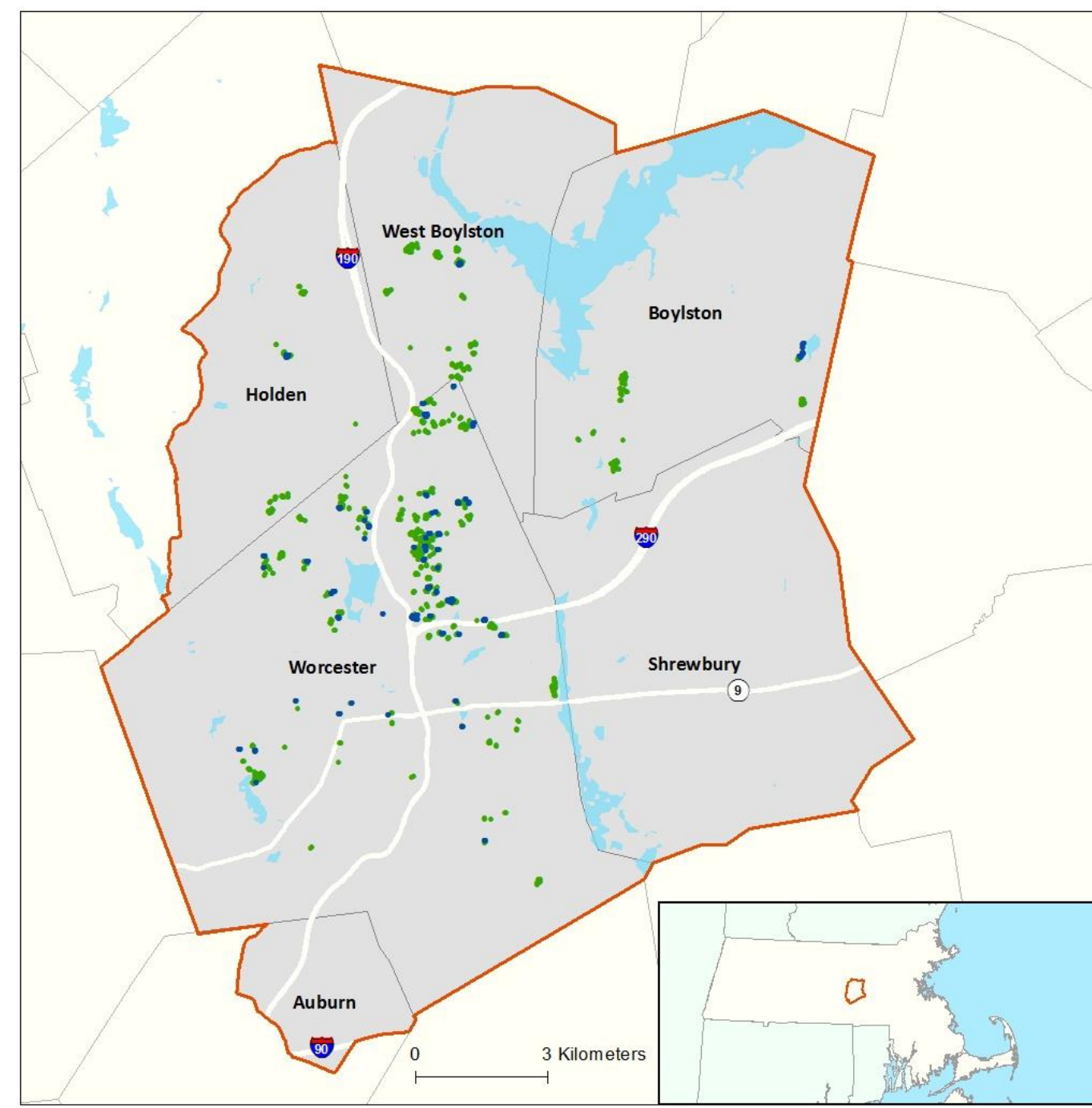


Figure 1: Location of the study area – the Asian Longhorned Beetle Regulation Zone in central Massachusetts

This study assesses how residents who received trees were impacted by the tree planting programs. 79 residents were interviewed to assess their reactions to the DCR and WTI tree planting programs. 1,516 trees sampled for health characteristics; 205 were associated with an interview. 95% of the interviews were conducted in Worcester.

Field Work



Figure 2: Photograph of interview in progress with local resident

Over the course of our study, we conducted 67 short interviews and 12 long interviews. After recording and transcribing the 79 interviews we coded them based on the following themes: general tree care, environmental awareness, relationship with stakeholders, change in neighborhood and community, the process of getting tree(s), and general feelings.

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Demographics and Interview

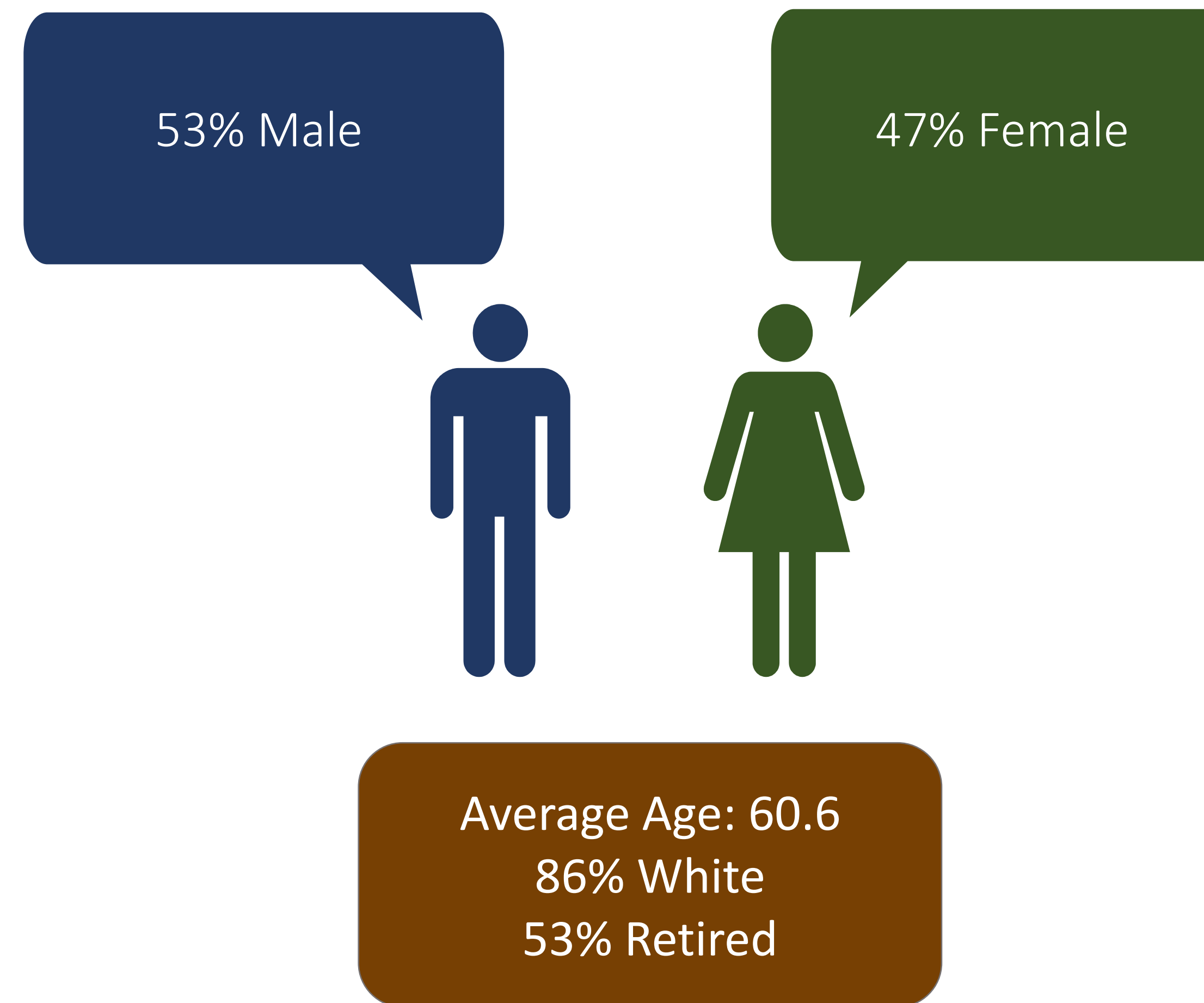


Figure 3: Demographic Breakdown

Interviews consisted of both short and long interviews. Short interviews, 3-5 minutes, consisted of people who were home during the time we were sampling their trees and agreed to participate in our study. Long interviews were scheduled and lasted 20-40 minutes. The demographics section was optional, 67% completed the form. Because the majority of our interviewees were sampled opportunistically, the resulting sample is biased. Homeowners who were older and retired were more likely to be at home during the times we were sampling trees and thus make up the majority of the population.

1. How did you come to have this tree?

2. Tell me about the care of your tree:

- Now that it is older do you water it as much?
- Did you find it hard to care for your tree(s)?

3. Do you feel there has been a difference in your neighborhood as a result of the tree-planting effort?

- Do you have a close relationship with your neighbors?
- Do neighbors help each other out in caring for trees?
- Are there any community replanting efforts? Tell me about them

4. Have the tree-replanting efforts made you more aware of environmental issues or groups?

Analysis and Summary

Our analysis shows that residents who received trees from the DCR do not feel inherently burdened by the need to take care of the trees. The majority of residents (79%) reported following the DCR's suggested watering practices and 36% reported continued watering after this time period. Residents showed a preference for ornamentals and front yard trees.

Tree Care: Burdens and Limitations

Inherent to Trees

"There's **no hard part**, for me. I'm very happy to have them"
- Resident

Watering

"Oh we had to water them for two years – all of them we watered and watered, it was **quite an expense** on our water bill unfortunately. We were not too happy with that. **But now we have the nice trees.**"
- Resident

Age and Condition

"We're trying. We're in our 80s so it's not easy."
- Resident

"Well, I was watering up until this past year, and then I became handicapped."
- Resident

Tree Care: Motivations

Environmental Awareness

"If you have green you have a fabulous feeling of the environment and how it positively impacts your life."
-Resident

Neighborhood

"Since they've replanted trees it seems that people are **paying more attention** to how their houses look, you know."
-Resident

Personal

"I enjoy botany, certain aspects of plant life, and to make my yard more beautiful and then environment more beautiful. Plant a tree."
-Resident

Attitudes Towards Trees

Most planted Ornamental Trees

Cherry
Kousa Dogwood
Japanese Tree Lilac

Ornamental Trees

"Don't have to worry about it falling down and damaging the home."
-Resident

"Most of the trees I got were either a reddish color or would eventually flower. We wanted to add some colors to the property as we develop."
-Resident

Most Planted Shade Trees

Honeylocust
Dawn Redwood
Red Oak

Shade Trees

"Then we got some pines in the back. We're trying maybe to cut down some noise"
-Resident

"I wanted to have, make sure that there would be another that would grow in a fairly decent amount of time, to provide the shade that we lost."
-Resident

Front Yard Trees

"We wanted a prettier tree in the front and the ones in back we wanted ones that would grow tall and provide shade."
-Resident

"Well, I wanted a flowering tree in front"
-Resident