

Question 15 - Demographics

Write-in comments

<p>1) Why ask question #9 when questionnaire asked my address? 2) Taxes in Harvard for \$650K home is higher than similarly valued home in Newton or Wellesley according to Boston Globe. 3) Taxes in Harvard have gone up 40% in last 2-3 years. 4) School committee is arrogant, demanding and does not listen to voters. 5) Most importantly, schools in Harvard are excellent NOT because of the teachers, but rather because of the parents. Last year the teachers arrogance and the way they treated the students made that very evident.</p>
<p>A good question to ask would be where people lived previously, in particular an urban community or a rural community. I believe that many of our issues result from an urban vs. rural perspective.</p>
<p>answer to 14 depends on whether or not the school committee gains control over the superintendent's penchant for aggrandizing his budget in order to increase his salary. The previous school committee is responsible for our fiscal mess.</p>
<p>Answer to Q 14 may change, but for now, we're here for good</p>
<p>As a couple who have lived here for forty years our home is very important to us. We worked very hard for it and deserve it. We do not consider it a commodity.</p>
<p>As I am 79 years old, who knows? My mom lived to 101, my brother is 89.</p>
<p>As soon as the youngest graduates, we hope to be ocean bound!</p>
<p>Because of the current real estate tax and the total lack of consideration for seniors living on a fixed budget, we will be forced to sell our home and move to a much more affordable town.</p>
<p>demographics have changed over the last 20 years, and have completely changed the town's character and form of government</p>
<p>depends on the rising tax rates</p>
<p>Don't expect to be able to afford to stay long-term.</p>
<p>Efforts to moderate senior citizen concerns require testing seniors' actual needs, interests and capabilities. There is nothing in this survey that solicits information about the senior population. Why Town administrators feel that services at a community center are something desired or that we want our money spent on that is no longer a mystery. Instead of giving us a menu of options you are willing to fund, how about asking if we want any money spent on us at all. Perhaps we would rather have a major discount on our taxes proportional to what our bill is. The demographics you have collected are all biased to spending directed at only some of the Town's population.</p>
<p>For seniors, staying in Harvard depends on taxes, over-rides, services to the elderly, and how long we can manage to stay in our homes. COA and the Library are the best services Harvard has to offer to seniors.</p>
<p>good support services</p>
<p>Harvard has become too expensive for retirees. After 40+ years here, we cannot afford to stay.</p>
<p>Harvard has good support system of COA, Harvard Help and churches</p>
<p>Harvard town meeting and many voters are out of touch today. Demographically there is an elitist attitude as demonstrated by the characterization of what is necessary and how few dollars per household each successive increase in taxes actually costs. It feels as though these same advocates for an ever increasing budget must all have either trust funds, work for companies where there are consistent substantial raises and a guaranteed future. That is not the case for most people I speak with both within and outside of Harvard. Yet Harvard keeps granting substantial overall increases in expenses under the guise that to do less will be catastrophic. Our services level in Harvard is already very very low. Yet our taxes are within the top 10% in the State. This cannot continue to be funded on the backs of the taxpayers in general. Either we must shrink our expectations of what is "required" or we must allow industry to help subsidize the town by allowing those changes necessary to attract companies will to locate within our current or future borders while paying reasonable taxes. Personally I am tired of only hearing from those who wish things to never change and are the ones who show up an advocate for more more money at town meeting etc. The Press would also do better to start looking for those silent voices in town and reporting more on their wishes.</p>
<p>Harvard was 38 years ago, and still is, a beautiful town. "Improvements" and new building are not needed. We do, and shall in the future, need all the unoccupied open space we have.</p>
<p>Hope I can continue to live here. Taxes are out of sight!</p>
<p>How did you decide to partition the Harvard Map into the sections you did? It might have been better to partition it by named neighborhoods (e.g., Town Center, Still River, Shaker Village, etc.)</p>

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<p>how long I stay in town depends on what happens with the taxes. reasonable increases - I stay indefinitely; Continued overrides, I leave, because in the long run it'll be too much and I'd rather move when I'm younger (note kids have graduated from Bromfield a few years ago)</p>
<p>I am very concerned about school funding. If I need to move my child to a private facility, I will also need to move my home to another community based on the overvaluation of my home and the more than \$12000.00 in taxes I pay for a house with unusable land.</p>
<p>i can not afford to continue to live in harvard due to the high real estate taxes</p>
<p>I do not have school-aged children, but I do have relatives who attend the Harvard schools (nephews).</p>
<p>I expect that some day we will move to a tiered over 55 community if we reach an age when we can't take care of or afford our property.</p>
<p>I feel blessed to live in Harvard and to have raised 4 sons here, one of whom now lives in Harvard. As a town we must limit spending to income and not believe we can simply raise taxes to buy increase services and pay higher salaries. If we continue to budget and spend more than our current income my wife and I, and many others I suspect, will not be able to afford living in Harvard.</p>
<p>I have concerns that some of these questions could be taken to suggest that Devens should not be part of Harvard. It has always been my belief that no town should give up its lands without compensation for loss of revenue.</p>
<p>I have teenagers from a previous marriage attending school in another district, as well as a pre-schooler.</p>
<p>I hope that somewhere in this questionnaire there is a place for my comments</p>
<p>I plan to sell my current home and plan to purchase a single level dwelling. I am currently retired and a widow. I hope to find a suitable dwelling in Harvard.</p>
<p>I think age could be a factor since older voters may not have easy access to computers or may have difficulty obtaining a paper copy.</p>
<p>I think it is wrong that many citizens change their votes regarding the override once their children finish at Harvard's public schools. In conversations, I don't hear that the town or school system is any more wasteful or inefficient NOW THAN IN YEARS PAST--instead votes are changing because kids are through with school. "I got mine, now you gotta try and find your own way to get yours." seems to be the motto. For years Harvard benefitted because of its unique relationship with Devens and Mass. politics. The recent increase in per capita income in town is among the highest percentage in the state, but now there's a problem with a small budget override? Let's find a way to help the elderly to pay their taxes in some way besides forcing the schools to install pay toilets! They're already paying extra for nearly everything else.</p>
<p>I think people who move to Harvard for the schools and only remain in the town for that length; should be assessed a tax when they move out i.e. the remain balance on what it cost to education their children. It is their responsibility not mine.</p>
<p>I want to remain indefinitely however, the never ending increases in taxes is making it very difficult for older citizens to afford Harvard on a long term basis. Overrides make it even more difficult to stay in Harvard.</p>
<p>I will leave when taxes drive me out.</p>
<p>I would like the choice in Question 14 of "It depends", because it much depends on the way in which the town evolves over the next two years.</p>
<p>I would like to live in Harvard for a long time, but given the way things have been going the past few years, this may not be an option.</p>
<p>I would like to retire here if rapidly rising property taxes don't force me out.</p>
<p>I would like to stay here for life. My wife says we'll die here, however if the taxes keep climbing the way they are we will have to move.</p>
<p>I would like to stay in Harvard until my son graduates from high school, but the high tax rate may force me to leave as soon as this year.</p>
<p>I'd like to know how many children whose family resides in town attend private schools (i.e. not HES or</p>
<p>I'd like to move but it's unlikely, and our property is special to us.</p>
<p>If Harvard were to change dramatically we would consider moving.</p>

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If the town gov't doesn't change it's tax and spend trend, we'll be out of here very soon !
I'm really not sure how long we'll stay in Harvard. It well could be more than 15 years. If there was a "not sure" answer to this question, i'd have checked that one.
In our eighties, we need to maove to smaller place, but not here.
Inclusive
Indefinitely, until we are "taxed" out.
Lets control 40B developments.
Many residents who want to remain in Harvard indefinitely can not afford overrides. Many former residents I know voted for every override and then moved out of town as soon as their children graduated from the Bromfield School to avoid paying for the high real estate taxes they themselves had voted for.
Might be interesting to ask why leaving, if there are plans to leave.
More than 85% of our property taxes go to support the school system. We pay about 75% of our health insurance. The deal made with the teachers was FOOLISH. The deal made with the school superintendent that WE DID NOT NEED was foolish and a complete WASTE of our money. The Selectmen, esp the currently ones, are too lazy to do a budget and instead insist upon overrides. There is also a lot of NEPOTISM as well. DO YOUR JOB! The words are to be FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE and EFFICIENT. Look them up in a dictionary!
Need a greater socio-economic mix in town.
Need to downsize and Harvard is too expensive.
No one will be able to afford to stay in Harvard unless the town looks to new models for funding services. Also the state mandated special education requirements are clearly not working.The SPED programs need to be state run with hub service areas. Our schools are clearly going to go broke over Special education.
No questions regarding age.
None
not sure how long we will remain in Harvard
NOT SURE THAT IT MATTERS FOR THIS PURPOSE
Not very relevant for college students
Note I bought into the town from out of state at the housing PEAK (and yes, MA is a damn expensive place to live). Given our recent town leadership I do have serious concerns that some of the fundamental motivations for choosing Harvard will not hold going forward(schools, housing density, character), which has already caused me to start considering other regional towns as a possible move in the future, as well as begin researching private schooling options since there is a real possibility our current school system will not be able to maintain the historical level of performance due to dilution and scale (taking on more students via Devens or merging with another school system will dilute quality of education services)
On fixed income--and can't afford all the new taxes and uncontrolled spending--can live some place else and get more goods and sevices for 1/2 the price. Such as sewer,water,trash pick up, etc. The town offers less service than when we came 26 yrs ago. The perks and Salarys for town Employees are the only thing that seem to improve--But no benefit to the Tax payer.
Our area benefits from no services. No lighting, mail delivery, trash removal, road maintenance, etc. We have no children in school and the library offers few if any programs for adults. Our taxes are high, our pay has not changed. We are forced to make cuts and so must you.
Our desire is to stay indefinitely but our financial resources may force us to sell in order to live. It all depends on what happens with social security, health taxation and town taxes and how long we can continue to bring in enough work to keep going.
Our family has had land in Harvard since 1939
Our schools are priceless. As a small business owner who hires from a 30 mile radius, I see everyday the difference between well-educated and not well-educated citizens.
Our staying in town will be based on tax costs and if the town gets Devens back. We would move if Harvard re-incorporated Devens.
Primary reason for moving to Harvard was for the schools; but it is a great town for many reasons.

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Question 14 doesn't include a "not sure" choice. We love Harvard but don't know how much longer we can afford to live here. As I mentioned, not everyone is even close to the mean income and some of us are really struggling to get by.
Question 14 is directly tied to the affordability of living in this town. When times were good we would stay indefinitely, in these tight times... overrides have a lot of bearing on our decision to stay.
Retirement is not that far away, and we are considering our future in Harvard uncertain with increasing property taxes.
Seems to assume that with no kids in school you would vote against school funding. not my experience in this community
Should have asked about age range and gender. Q 12 not clear - did have school-age children, before moving to Harvard. DO have randchildren attending Harvard public schools.
Something will have to be done about taxing people who don't have children in school and have paid taxes as long as I have. If not, many of the older generation will be forced to move.
Steadily increasing taxes have me looking to leave Harvard even though I enjoy the town.
Taxes will be significant factor in my remaining a Harvard resident.
The answer to question 14 will in some ways depend on the taxes. When we purchased our home in July 2000 the taxes were \$3,200 - \$3,400. We have since done a "modest" remodeling of the house. Our taxes will be roughly \$9,400, even adjusting for a 20% increase in the value from the remodeling that represents a 10%/year compound rate of increase! In addition to the \$9,400 we now pay a busing fee \$275(?) roughly an additional \$1,000 for extracurricular sports. I voted for approval of all of the overrides for the first 5 or 6 years we lived in the town but have since become very disillusioned with the School Board and their lack of respect for the will of the voters of this town.
The demographics section seems to assume that the two most important factors in whether or not another override passes are the length of time a person has been a town resident and whether that voter has children in the local public schools. Those two factors are all but irrelevant in my case. The most relevant factors are my distrust of the members of the school committee and Dr. Jefferson.
The rate of volunteerism - appears to have declined since we arrived in Harvard in 1993.
The school system is too small to be able to handle special needs situations appropriately, and they suggested we seek education privately for our son, which we did. I see no reason to over-fund a system which cannot handle students who learn faster than most.
The steady rise in taxes has us discussing whether we should be looking for somewhere else to live. I find this disheartening after living in the town for so many years.
The tax rate is going up so much that we may not be able to afford the town in the next few years. I think that the plight of senior citizens on fixed incomes should be taken into consideration when spending gets out of hand. We can't all afford to fund some of this spending indefinitely.
There is no question asking the voter's age. This is an important metric in determining if the sample tracks with the actual voter age demographic.
This is already a town in which people tend to move out after their kids have been educated. Keep up the current override rate and we oldtimers will not be here to help pay the bills.
This is my home.
To state the obvious, increasing property taxes makes it difficult for many long-term, fixed-income, and retired residents to stay in town as they might wish to do.
To stay - unless I'm pushed out by higher taxes.
Too expensive and DPW and T. Jefferson are wasting money I work too hard for
too expensive..it is a shame what has happened to this town..
too much money is spent on schools in Harvard. Harvard does not need to have the smallest class size in Massachusetts.
Unless my husband and I can agree on whether the quality of life in Harvard is worth the cost, we'll be here forever. Otherwise, we'll move. The point where the quality is not worth the cost is getting closer!

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We also have a college-age son who graduated from Bromfield in 2006.
We are looking to retire in the next few years & want to downsize & decrease expenses. We would like to stay in Harvard but cannot find affordable housing, and the increase in property taxes are becoming burdensome.
We did not move here because of the schools. When we bought, we thought we would retire here. We both agree that we are more likely to move once all our kids are out of high school GIVEN THE PROPERTY taxes we pay v. the services we receive, and the rate at which the property taxes are increasing. Harvard has become a magnet for people with children ever since MCAS results were published. Our school is always in the top 10, and it is significantly cheaper to live here than any of the other top 10 towns. But if these parents keep voting in big overrides, it will soon be untrue.
We have been actively trying to sell our house for over a year. A major part of our decision to move out of Harvard is our perception that the budget in Harvard is out of control and that there will be no end to the requests for overrides.
We may be here less than 5, but currently have no plans to move
We might be able to save some money by turning down the thermostat in the schools. It's OK for teachers and students to wear sweatshirts or sweaters to school. My kids never need to because it is so hot.
We were told by the school system that they could not meet our son's advanced academic needs even as a five year old (because of the school system's size).
We will live in Harvard as long as we can continue to afford to live here. Our taxes quadrupled in the 20 years that we have been here from \$2500 to \$10000. If this trend continues, we will be paying \$40,000 in 20 years. We certainly will not be able to afford that level of taxation.
We will not be able to continue living in Harvard if they keep having overrides. We will not want to live in Harvard if the town officials and school board with hold information and continue to be fiscally irresponsible.
We would like to remain as long as taxes don't force us out.
We've been here for 23 years. We're approaching empty nester status and want to downsize. Currently, there are very few to no options for finding appropriate housing in Harvard for this demographic status. Also, a lack of services forces us to consider moving elsewhere. Also, my pet peeve, I'm tired and frustrated at the leadership or lack thereof of town officials. There is too much time wasted on "task forces", "consultants", etc. and the same issues are re-hashed over and over (town center septic, Devens, etc.)
WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK FOR MY AGE???????????
Why is it included? What difference does it make for the survey?
Will remain in Harvard unless character of town is destroyed by development.
Would like to stay in Harvard but kids will be out of school soon and taxes are getting too high.