

HARTFORD METRO AREA

State: Connecticut

Census Designation: Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown, CT



Connecticut has a reputation for being one of the nation's most segregated states, racially and economically. While the state prohibited school segregation by law in 1868 (Marcin 1971), residential—and thus school—segregation not only persisted but actually increased throughout much of the 20th century.

The metro area is divided into a large number of small districts, a situation that tends to be accompanied by greater segregation. And, as shown in Table 3, the degree of racial/ethnic segregation between districts in the Hartford area is extremely high, both between white and Black and white and Hispanic students. To illustrate, suppose, for example, our goal is to shift students around such that every school in the Hartford metro area has the same percentages of white, Black, and Hispanic students as the area overall (the diversity of the area is perfectly distributed across schools). In order to accomplish this goal, over 90 percent of our task—in a sense, 90 percent of the students we would have to move—would switch districts and not just schools.

This is due mostly to the concentration of the area's Black and Hispanic students in a small group of districts (though it is also, in part, a result of somewhat low segregation within many of the area's [mostly small] districts). And that happened over time. Hartford in particular went through phases of discriminatory development that parallel many of the other cities and metropolitan areas in this report. In 1924, West Hartford became the first Connecticut town to enact zoning regulations that essentially barred the construction of multifamily homes. This effectively prevented Black and Hispanic families, largely unable to afford single-family homes, from moving to the area, keeping it white (Putterman 2021).

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, federal lending discrimination built on this foundation of a mostly white West Hartford and a mostly Black central and East Hartford. Private covenants were also used

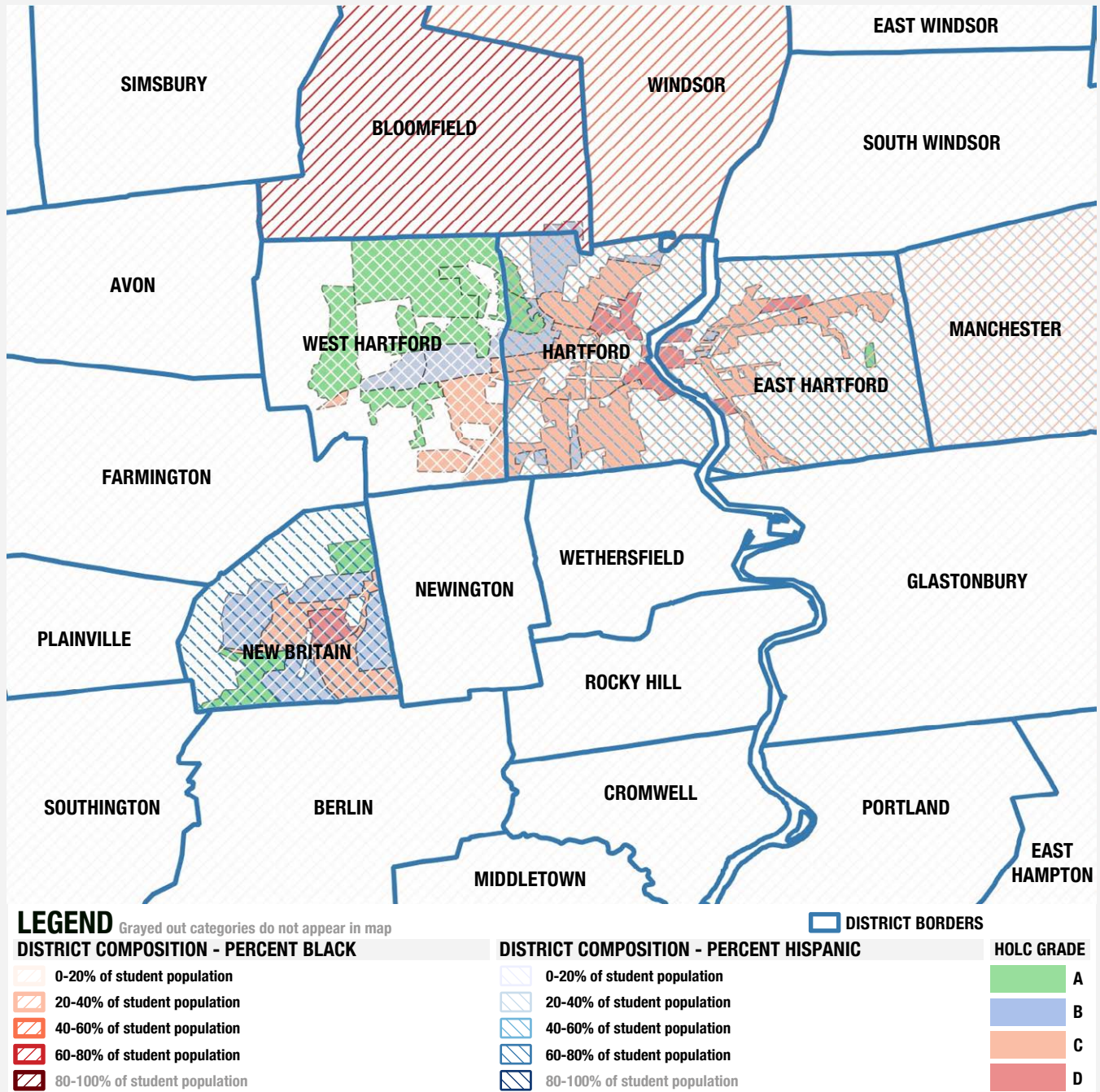
during the early 1940s to further mitigate any risk of Black and Hispanic families moving in (with the exception, of course, of domestic servants) (Dougherty 2021; Wilson 2018). Federally sponsored suburbanization during the middle decades of the 20th century, helped by the construction of highways for commuters (that also displaced many families of color), created all-white neighborhoods in the cities' suburbs, while segregated federal housing projects (which also displaced many families) ensured that the Black and growing Puerto Rican populations were confined to certain areas (Eaton 2020).

In addition, a variety of forces remain at play in Connecticut today, reinforcing Black/white and Hispanic/white segregation across Connecticut communities, including the usual suspects of ongoing steering, discriminatory sales and renting, mortgage lending discrimination, and ostensibly neutral zoning policies that reinforce racial segregation (Eaton 2020). As mentioned earlier in this report, recent housing audit reports from the Connecticut Fair Housing Center reveal the extent of ongoing mortgage lending discrimination and steering in the state (Connecticut Fair Housing Center 2017).

Figure 14 presents the composition map for the part of the metro area surrounding the three “Hartford districts”—West Hartford, Hartford, and East Hartford—which immediately jump out. The tri-city area, while geographically small compared with the metro area as a whole, serves about one in four of its public school students, but roughly half of its Black and Hispanic students. The delineation of the three Hartford cities/districts maps quite neatly onto the HOLC-graded areas, with all of the high-risk D-graded zones and most of the C-graded zones located in East Hartford and Hartford proper, and most of the A-/B-graded zones in West Hartford. The HOLC notes indicate that the exceptional C-graded zones in the south of West Hartford were assigned due to an “infiltration of mixed foreign” families (Dougherty 2021).

Figure 14

SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT RACIAL/ETHNIC COMPOSITION MAP, HARTFORD METRO AREA, 2018



To improve visibility of HOLC zones, map does not include entire metro area. See Box 1 for information on measures.



Yet Hartford (proper) was an almost exclusively (95 percent) white city in 1940, with its Black population concentrated in just 2-3 Census tracts (all of which, like the D-graded zones in the map, were in the eastern part of the city). Yet even mostly white neighborhoods were potentially subject to lower grades due, for example, to small groups of

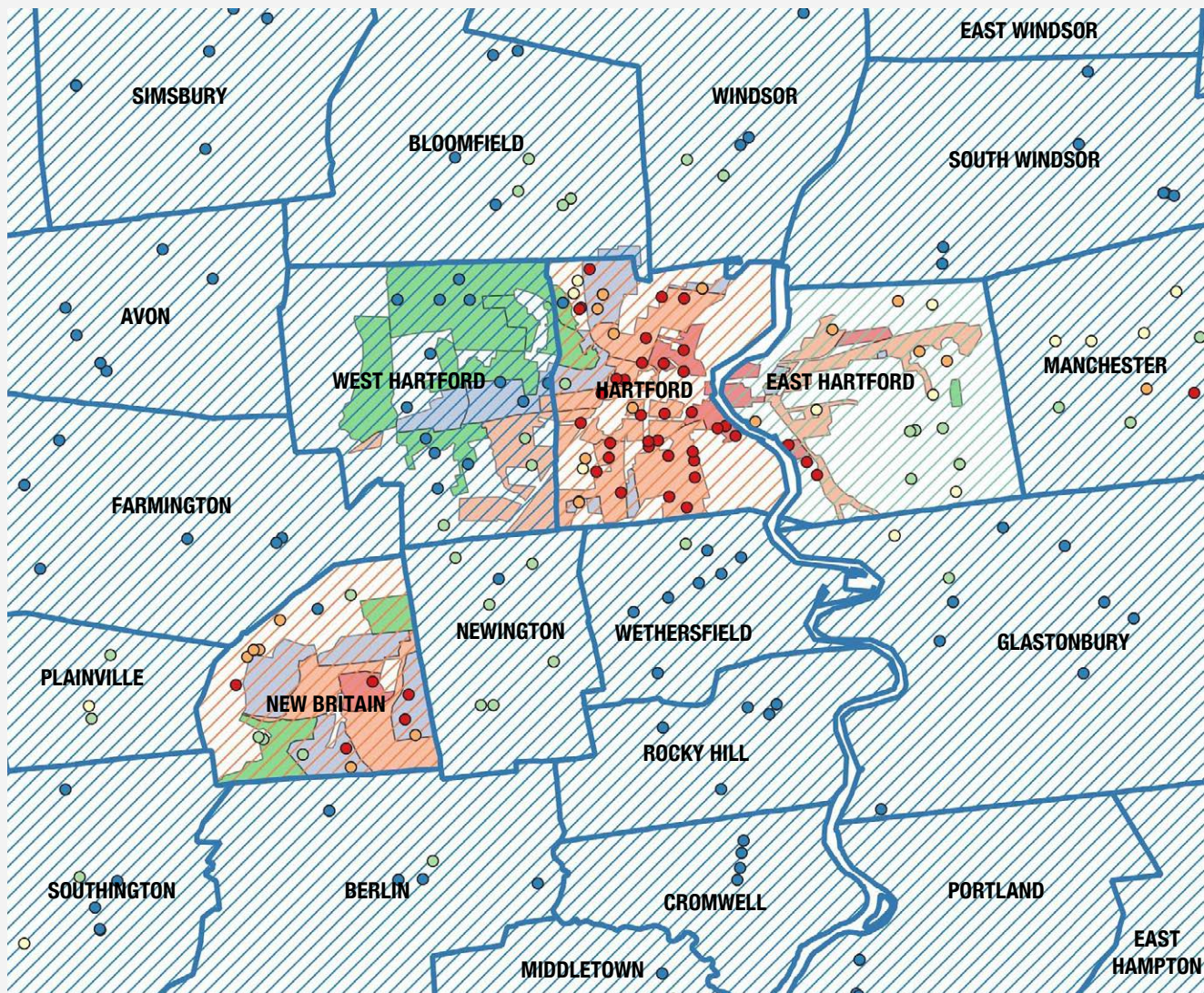
Black families confined to a street or two. Redlining, steering, and other tactics in subsequent decades spurred compositional change, with the white share of the city's population falling to approximately 85 percent in 1960, 71 percent in 1970, and 44 percent in 1980 (Dougherty 2021).

Today, predictably, Hartford and East Hartford both serve student populations that are roughly 80 percent Black and Hispanic, compared with around 25 percent in West Hartford. The efforts that began toward the beginning of the 20th century have, 100 years later, played out largely as intended.

There is one additional district in the area with significant coverage of neighborhoods that received HOLC grades: New Britain, directly to the southwest of West Hartford. New Britain's HOLC zones are a mix of A-D grades. Like Hartford's, its residents were virtually all white until 1960, a proportion that declined steadily over subsequent decades.

Figure 15

SCHOOL DISTRICT FUNDING ADEQUACY MAP, HARTFORD METRO AREA, 2018



LEGEND Grayed out categories do not appear in map

<p>SCHOOL NEIGHBORHOOD POVERTY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highest poverty (0-185% inc-to-pov ratio) ● High poverty (185-242% ratio) ● Medium poverty (242-303% ratio) ● Low poverty (303-406% ratio) ● Lowest poverty (ratio of 406% or higher) 	<p>DISTRICT FUNDING ADEQUACY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▨ More than \$5,000 PP below adequate ▨ \$1,000-5,000 PP below adequate ▨ Between -\$1,000 and +\$1,000 PP ▨ \$1,000-5,000 PP above adequate ▨ More than \$5,000 PP above adequate 	<p>HOLC GRADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A ■ B ■ C ■ D
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□ DISTRICT BORDERS

To improve visibility of HOLC zones, map does not include entire metro area. See Box 1 for information on measures.



Today (in 2019), the district's student population is 64 percent Hispanic and 11 percent Black.

The rest of the area's districts, including those not shown in the map, were ungraded in 1935-40 and are quite sparse in terms of Black and Hispanic students today, with only three exceptions to the latter statement—Bloomfield and Windsor directly to the north of Hartford, and Manchester directly to the east. In general, throughout this area of Connecticut, HOLC zones do a decent job predicting student racial composition today.

Some of the compositional patterns in the non-graded areas can be attributed, at least in part, to the blockbusting and steering that were also prevalent throughout the latter half of the 20th century. One noteworthy example is the aforementioned Bloomfield. This area remained undeveloped through the 1940s (and thus did not receive HOLC ratings); today it is the state's only majority-Black school district. Bloomfield was 94 percent white in 1960, but this declined to 70 percent white by 1980 (Dougherty 2021; Putterman 2021). The district was deliberately targeted by blockbusting and steering, with the goal of making it into a suburban escape for Hartford's middle-class Black families, while excluding these upwardly mobile families from West Hartford and other suburbs (Dougherty 2012).

This residential segregation, due to both current and past forces, including court decisions such as *Sheff v. O'Neill* (1996), also contributes to—and is reinforced by—striking racial and ethnic disparities in school funding adequacy in the Hartford metro area. Figure 15 presents the area's funding map. When viewing the map, bear in mind that Connecticut is a relatively high-spending state with relatively low poverty (i.e., low costs) overall, and the vast majority of public school districts spend well more than is needed to achieve the (modest) goal of national average test scores in reading and math (Baker, Di Carlo, Reist et al. 2021). This is quite clear in the map, which is dominated by districts in which spending exceeds estimated adequate levels (green and blue striped patterns).

Educational opportunity, however, remains extremely unequal and is geographically distributed by race and ethnicity. There are two districts in the entire metro (including those outside of the area in the map) in which spending is below estimated adequate levels: Hartford (with a negative gap of -\$3,059 per pupil) and New Britain (-\$1,668). Every other district in the entire metro area spends at least \$5,000 per pupil above adequate levels, with one (predictable) exception: East Hartford (positive funding gap of approximately \$1,800). The only three districts in the metro area with any D-graded areas are also those with the least adequate funding.

And, on a related note, the same basic conclusions apply to the distribution of school-level poverty. Schools within Hartford, for instance, are invariably higher poverty (red or orange dots), standing in stark contrast with schools in West Hartford, which are mostly those in lower-poverty neighborhoods. All but one of the highest-poverty schools (red dots) are found in the three districts (Hartford, East Hartford, and New Britain) that were home to D-graded HOLC zones in 1935-40. The geographical distribution of poverty that depresses local revenue and drives up costs was set in motion almost a century ago.

Finally, Figure 16 presents the relationship between funding gaps (horizontal axis) and outcome gaps (vertical axis) for all school districts in the Hartford metro area. To reiterate, most of the districts in the area, as in Connecticut overall, spend enough to meet our estimates of costs required to achieve national average outcomes (and are therefore located to the right of the vertical line indicating zero difference between spending and estimated costs). Relatively few still fall short of those outcome goals (they are located below the horizontal line representing no difference in average scores between the district and the U.S. average).¹⁰

10 In general, the comparison of adequacy estimates from the NECM with student outcome gaps produces intuitive results: Adequate funding is associated with above-average scores, and vice versa. Deviation from this trend, as is somewhat the case with these Hartford area districts, may be due to some combination of the following: (1) imprecision in our variables (finance or testing data); (2) the models cannot control for everything (i.e., "omitted variable bias"); or (3) "real" differences in efficiency. For more discussion, see Baker et al. (2021).

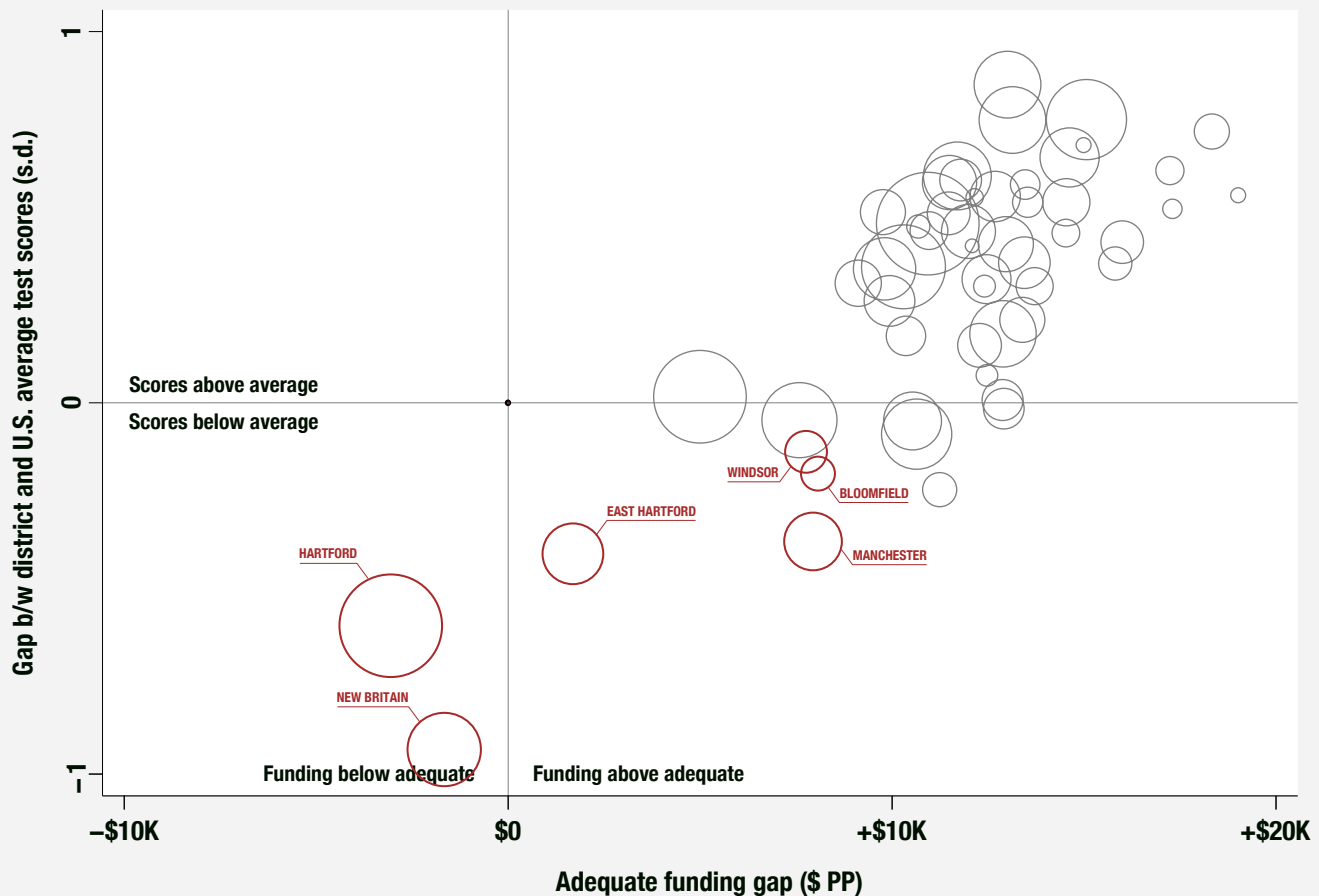
Most important for our purposes here, however, is the general pattern of the circles (i.e., districts) by district racial/ethnic composition (with majority-minority districts indicated with red circles and labels). Specifically, the majority-Black/Hispanic districts in the Hartford metropolitan area are those with the least

adequate funding (they are located further to the left of the plot) as well as the lowest student outcomes (located furthest down in the plot). This is unequal educational opportunity by race and ethnicity, created and sustained by segregation.

This section is from the report, "**Segregation and School Funding: How Housing Discrimination Reproduces Unequal Inequality**," available at: <http://shankerinstitute.org/segfunding>

Figure 16

STUDENT OUTCOME GAPS BY ADEQUATE FUNDING GAPS, HARTFORD METRO AREA DISTRICTS, 2018



Red markers with labels are majority-Black/Hispanic districts



Data source: School Finance Indicators Database; Stanford Education Data Archive

Note: Markers weighted by student enrollment. Outcome gaps (y-axis) are the difference in average math and reading scores (in standard deviations) between each district and the U.S. average. Funding gaps (x-axis) are the difference between actual spending per pupil and estimated spending required to achieve national average test scores.