



**Research Brief for
Research Clear-Eyed Equity:
Setting a Climate Equity and Justice Research Agenda**

Problem: Climate Change impacts will be felt most by populations that are the most vulnerable. Boston MA, was ranked the most unequal city in the country by the Brookings Institution and the 6th most vulnerable to the coastal flooding losses globally by the World Bank. Boston is also a minority-majority city that is highly segregated. Since these problems are inextricably linked, we want to understand more fully, **what policies can we develop today to support long term climate resilience and increase racial and economic equity?**

Displacement: To explore this question, we propose focusing on a more specific issue to clarify how current racial and economic inequity impact a neighborhood's ability to be resilient. In Greater Boston currently, housing prices are rapidly rising due to rapid economic development. This housing crunch is, in part, driven by development in the Seaport District which is fueling an influx of highly paid jobs. At the same time, the Seaport District is one of Boston's most vulnerable neighborhoods to coastal flooding.

In contrast, some of the highest elevation land in the city is occupied by low-income residents and communities of color. It is not hard to predict that once coastal areas become less desirable due to flooding or increased flood insurance premiums, more affluent residents will crowd out the current, more vulnerable, residents. This would dramatically increase the displacement pressures on inland low-income communities.

In addition, large segments of the community are socially and economically marginalized, which limits community cohesion, coordination, communication and more importantly trust. Conversely, climate resilience or our ability to spring back will require a united response from all Bostonians. Therefore, promoting climate resilience necessitates addressing the drivers of inequity in our city, namely, physical, social and cultural displacement spurred by gentrification more recently and institutionalized racism historically.

Questions: How do economic displacement, gentrification and neighborhood destabilization in the present-day impact the ability of a neighborhood to bounce back/be resilient in the face of extreme weather and climate impacts in the future? How can we leverage current policy efforts to dismantle systemic drivers of inequality? How can we leverage current policy and programmatic efforts related to displacement to create opportunities for socially and culturally marginalized groups to be engaged on local decision-making? How can we reduce cultural distance between social economic and racially diverse populations in the city? Might efforts to create a climate resilience, particularly those related to preparedness serve to bridge the distance between diverse communities?

Research Strategy: Evaluate which neighborhoods were experiencing population turnover in New York and New Orleans prior to their hurricanes and how they fared in their ability to rebuild after the storms, with particular focus on displacement and its mechanisms that followed the storms.

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