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Landmark Data Tool Spotlights Bay Area Inequality — And Solutions — for Policymakers, Advocates

OAKLAND, Calif. —The Bay Area economy is experiencing phenomenal growth, yet rising inequality and displacement are making it impossible for working-class people and communities of color to stay and thrive — ultimately undermining the region's future. Equity — just and fair inclusion — is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity, and data is central to making it a reality.

Produced by a partnership between the San Francisco Foundation, PolicyLink, and the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California (PERE), the [Bay Area Equity Atlas](#) provides 21 powerful equity metrics disaggregated by race, income, and geography and tracking change over time across the nine-county region. Developed with community partners, the Bay Area Equity Atlas is a comprehensive resource for data and policy solutions. Its metrics are aligned with the San Francisco Foundation's commitment to equity by advancing economic security, anchoring the region's neighborhoods, and strengthening the political voice of low income and people of color.

"Equity is the issue of our generation," said **Fred Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer at the San Francisco Foundation**. "For the first time, we have a comprehensive platform that equips practitioners with data tools to identify disparities and address them. That should give us all profound hope."

The Atlas provides rich, unique data that reveals where the greatest disparities lie, and where significant strides have been made. Examples include:

- **Income growth:** Between 2000 and 2015, full-time workers with the lowest earnings (at the 10th percentile) saw their incomes decline by 13 percent. During the same time frame, the incomes of workers in the middle percentile were completely flat, while top earners (at the 90th percentile) saw their paychecks grow by 13 percent.
- **Diversity of elected officials:** Regionwide, Latinx people make up 24 percent of the population but only 9 percent of top elected officials. In East Palo Alto, Latinx people are 63 percent of the population but only 18 percent of elected officials, ranking it worst among all Bay Area cities when it comes to Latinx political representation.
- **Rent burden:** Asian or Pacific Islander renters have the lowest rates of rent burden across major racial and ethnic groups, at 43 percent, but disaggregated data reveals that 58 percent of Vietnamese renters, and 51 percent of Chinese, Korean, and Pacific Islander renters are burdened, compared with just 22 percent of Indian renters.

"Data is a crucial ingredient for winning policy changes," said **Sarah Treuhaft, Managing Director at PolicyLink**. "We built the Bay Area Equity Atlas to put powerful data in the hands of grassroots groups leading campaigns on issues ranging from rent control to police accountability, in communities from Gilroy to Santa Rosa."

The Atlas provides data for 272 geographies, including the region as a whole (under both 9- and 5-county designations), its nine separate counties, 40 sub-county areas, the state of California, and 220 places including cities and Census

Designated Places. It is an extension of the [National Equity Atlas](#) indicator and mapping system, which was launched in 2014 by PolicyLink and PERE.

“Shifting power and policy in the Bay Area requires elevating the vision and voice of communities too often left behind,” says **Manuel Pastor, Director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California (PERE)**. “By leveraging actionable data to shape equity conversations and advance inclusive policies, the Bay Area Equity Atlas is a powerful tool to both highlight today’s challenges and make clear the benefits of racial and economic inclusion.”

The data from the Atlas is already being used to advance equity locally. The Hayward Collective, a social justice nonprofit, used a [fact sheet](#) featuring Bay Area Equity Atlas data on the growth of the city’s renter population and the increasing affordability challenges to engage youth in its advocacy for stronger just cause eviction protections and rent control. On March 5, the City Council voted unanimously to extend the city’s just cause protections to all renters in the city. Previously, these protections only applied to renters living in buildings constructed before 1979.

“Gathering, analyzing, contextualizing, and presenting data is a skillset that we — a volunteer-run grassroots organization – don’t have the resources for,” said **Alicia G. Lawrence, an organizer with the Hayward Collective**. “Collaborating with the Bay Area Equity Atlas team for data we know exists and supports the anecdotal stories of tenants in our community makes our policy position stronger when going toe-to-toe with the well-funded and professionally run opposition; especially when they use data points that don’t account for the holistic conditions of our community.”

Erasing inequities and ensuring all residents can fully participate and thrive is the path to inclusive prosperity. The Bay Area Equity Atlas equips change-makers and advocates with data, stories, and policy solutions to drive equity action in the region.

About the San Francisco Foundation

With more than \$1.5 billion in assets, the San Francisco Foundation is one of the largest community foundations in the country. The foundation is committed to expanding opportunity and ensuring a more equitable future for all in the Bay Area. Together with its donors, the foundation distributed \$154 million to nonprofit organizations in the last fiscal year. The San Francisco Foundation serves Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties. For more information, visit [SFF.org](#).

About PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®. For more information, visit [PolicyLink.org](#).

About PERE

The Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) at USC conducts research and facilitates discussions on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, social movement building, and immigrant integration. For more information, visit [dornsife.usc.edu/PERE](#).