

Accelerating an Equitable Recovery in the Bay Area

Opportunities for Aligned Action

Summary of Research



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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the vast structural inequalities faced in our Bay Area community. Existing inequities have made the current crisis more painful for many people, including people experiencing poverty, disabled people, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian Pacific Islander, and people of color. These inequities do not stop at the county line. Recent uprisings have highlighted the need for transformative, structural change, and the need to center racial equity at the heart of these conversations.

Cities and counties across the region convened local economic recovery task forces early in the pandemic, identifying local priorities and actions to provide immediate relief and to advance local recovery strategies. As the State and Federal governments determine relief and recovery packages in the coming weeks and months, there are opportunities for us to align as a region behind key priorities and harness the region's collective power to rebuild and regrow a Bay Area where everyone can thrive.

We are convening leaders from across the Bay Area to identify regional priorities and discuss upcoming state and federal policy windows and opportunities for aligned action. To ground these conversations, we worked with community partners and researchers

to report on the following key areas of research:

- **[Bay Area Indicators of an Equitable Recovery](#)**. Research outlining the impact of the recovery of the region for low-income communities and communities of color. *Conducted by [PolicyLink](#).*
- **[Aligned Priorities in Bay Area Task Force Reports](#)**. A synthesis of the Bay Area local Economic Recovery Task Force reports, highlighting shared regional priorities and opportunities for alignment. *Conducted by [Estolano Advisors](#).*
- **[Bay Area Attitudes on Racial Equity and Regional Recovery](#)**. Understanding residents' perceptions and priorities of the Bay Area recovery. *Conducted by [EMC Research](#).*

Each of these reports identifies themes or findings in the following areas (1) Building a better economy, (2) Supporting under-invested communities, and (3) Ensuring affordable housing. The topline results from each report are included below. The full reports with more extensive findings can be accessed by clicking the links above on each report's title.

TOPLINE RESULTS:

Bay Area Indicators of an Equitable Recovery.

Data that is disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other demographics is critical to informing equitable recovery efforts, yet most of the typical sources for this data are lagged by several years. This report from PolicyLink and the Bay Area Equity Atlas compiles available indicators on the current state of equitable recovery for the Bay Area region.

Key findings include:

- More than 1.5 million Bay Area workers have filed for unemployment since the start of the pandemic. In every county in the region except for San Francisco, low-wage workers experienced the largest declines in employment, with employment rates dropping by 20 to 44 percent between January and October 2020.
- 42 percent of California's Black workers filed for unemployment during the pandemic, 1.75 times the rate of White workers. Virtually all Black workers with no post-secondary education in have filed for unemployment.
- Eight out of nine Bay Area Counties saw a substantial decrease in small business revenue. A national analysis from the AP revealed that businesses owned by people of color were last in line to receive PPP loans based on barriers in accessing the program's banking institutions or ineligibility.
- 19% of Latinx adults, and 16% of Black adults are experiencing food insecurity during the pandemic
- Children in Latinx and Black households are also at a disadvantage when it comes to online learning. Only 69% of Latinx students have consistent internet access during the pandemic.
- 137,500 Bay Area households— 11 percent of renter households—are behind on rent and at risk of eviction and indebtedness during the pandemic.
- There is more than \$488 million in total Bay Area rent debt, an average of nearly \$3,600 per household behind on rent.
- People of color and low-income renters have been disproportionately impacted by the recession and are more likely to be behind on rent. 79 percent of those behind on rent earn less than \$75,000 per year. Eighty-eight percent of renters that are behind on rent are people of color.

The [full report \(click to view\)](#) includes additional research and data on these key indicators.

TOPLINE RESULTS:

Aligned Priorities in Bay Area Task Force Reports.

With the wave of impacts shelter-in-place orders had on workers and business operators, we saw local leaders spring into action to assess and address their local communities' needs. In the midst of local jurisdictions' ongoing pandemic response efforts, local cross-sector task forces convened to develop subregional strategies for economic recovery.

Estolano Advisors prepared a memo to provide regional partners with a shared understanding of how subregional priorities align. This document aims to surface high-level priorities that are shared across the region, based on the work of local task forces. These key priorities for regional action are summarized below.

- **Small business support** through culturally competent technical assistance and access to capital via grants and loans.
- **Job quality improvements** that support low-income essential workers.
- **Cash assistance and guaranteed income** programs to support economically vulnerable individuals and families.
- **Digital inclusion** investments that dramatically expand access to internet connection, devices, and training.

- **Universal childcare access** to support women and low-income caretaker's participation in the workforce.
- **Affordable housing and tenant protections** through interventions that address rent debt and prevent evictions and expanding Project Homekey.

The [full report \(click to view\)](#) provides a summary of each task force and notes variation across local strategies, provides a glimpse into some implementation efforts that cities and counties have led as part of local recovery, and provides an overview of potential aligned state and federal policy levers.

TOPLINE RESULTS:

Bay Area Attitudes on Racial Equity and Regional Recovery.



EMC Research conducted a survey of adult residents in the 9-County Bay Area to better understand residents' perceptions and priorities in the recovery process. Over 800 interviews were conducted in mid-March, and the survey was offered in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese. Key findings include:

- In the midst of declining COVID case rates and vaccine rollout, half of residents are optimistic about the direction of the Bay Area.
- There is widespread agreement about the value of racial and economic diversity and inclusion, but a majority feel the Bay Area is currently falling short when it comes to people being treated equally.
- Residents are aware of the negative impacts the pandemic has had on many groups, particularly small businesses and those experiencing poverty and homelessness. Views are more neutral when it comes to residents' own personal pandemic experiences.
- Economic recovery, vaccination, and homelessness are top of mind priorities as the Bay Area looks to recover from COVID-19.

- While prioritizing economic recovery of vulnerable communities is not as top of mind for residents, they overwhelmingly find the proposal and its priorities important when presented with them.
- Messaging that centers on pursuing an equitable recovery for the benefit of future generations is compelling.
- Scientists and public health officials are viewed as particularly trustworthy messengers about economic recovery from the pandemic in the Bay Area.

The [full poll results \(click to view\)](#) include findings by subgroup and respondent demographics.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout has disproportionately impacted low-income communities and communities of color in almost every aspect – health, housing, employment, and economic stability. For the region to recover, racial equity must be at the forefront of our recovery efforts. We now have an opportunity to not just recover what we had a year ago, but to reimagine a Bay Area that includes people who have historically been left out far before COVID, and to harness the region’s collective power to rebuild and regrow a Bay Area where everyone can thrive.