Housing Precarity, Eviction and Inequality in the Wake of COVID-19

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COVID-19 has the potential to exacerbate a severe housing and economic crisis in the U.S., which will in turn undercut public health responses to the pandemic. Ensuring housing security is vital to mitigating the spread of the virus and sustaining health, economic security, and family stability. This joint, interdisciplinary project between UC Berkeley and Princeton University brings together a group of academics and data scientists to track, analyze, and respond to pandemic-driven spikes in eviction and displacement risks. Doing so requires two central elements, both of which rely heavily on data science tools and methodologies. First, we have developed the Eviction Tracking System, an innovative tool for tracking real-time eviction filings in more than a dozen cities across the U.S. Second, we have developed a housing precarity risk model using machine learning that allows us to better analyze and predict areas at disproportionate risk of eviction, displacement, unemployment, and infection in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This project provides major new sources of data that serve to inform research and public policy regarding housing and inequality in America.

Karen Chapple, Ph.D., is a city planner by training who studies inequalities in the planning, development, and governance of regions in the U.S. and Latin America, with a focus on economic development and housing. Her most recent book is Transit-Oriented Displacement or Community Dividends? Understanding the Effects of Smarter Growth on Communities.

Tim Thomas is an urban sociologist, demographer, and data scientist. His research examines how neighborhood change impacts racial and gender disparities in housing, segregation, and forced mobility. His work has been published in academic journals and used as evidence to inform civil and state housing law.

Peter Hepburn is a sociologist and demographer. His research examines how changes to three core social institutions — work, criminal justice, and housing — serve to produce and perpetuate inequality. His work has been published in Social Forces, Demography, Social Problems, and the Journal of Marriage and Family.