**Community Exploration**

***Who lives and works in your community? Who visits? Who might live, work, or visit your community in the future? What types of experiences need to be considered when identifying how to build community resilience in your city, town, or region?***

Climate change will not affect us all equally, and it is crucial that community resilience solutions are informed by people who will be most impacted. This tool will help you identify key perspectives that will be important to include on your Core Team.

Below is a list of characteristics to consider when thinking about who lives and works in your community, and specifically **Environmental Justice (EJ) and other priority populations** who may be most impacted by climate change.

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| **What do we mean when we say Environmental Justice Populations?**  Environmental Justice acknowledges that some groups of people have had access to fewer environmental benefits while being exposed to greater environmental harms, due to racial discrimination, economic disparities, or language isolation. In the Commonwealth, **EJ Populations** are [specific geographic areas that meet one or more criteria](https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1d6f63e7762a48e5930de84ed4849212) based on race, income, or languages spoken. |

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| **What do we mean when we say priority populations?**  Priority populations are people or communities who may be disproportionately impacted by climate change due to life circumstances that systematically increase their exposure to climate hazards or make it harder to respond. In addition to factors that contribute to EJ status (i.e., income, race, and language), other factors like physical ability, access to transportation, health, and age can indicate whether someone or their community will be disproportionately affected by climate change. This is driven by underlying contributors such as economic disparities, social biases, or accessibility barriers that create vulnerability. The term priority populations acknowledges that the needs of people with these experiences and expertise must take precedence when developing resilience solutions to reduce vulnerability to climate change. |

As you answer the questions below, consider who from your community might be able and interested in joining your Core Team as a Community Liaison with strong connections to EJ neighborhoods or people who fit one or more of these other priority characteristics. Community Liaisons can speak to their own personal experience, and can help make sure that the process reaches and learns from the experiences of communities they have strong connections with.

Your Equity Partner will be a great resource for thinking about this data and whose perspectives will be important to include on your Core Team. In addition to the data sources listed below, feel free to use any local data collected by your municipality or local organizations within the last five years.

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| **Guided Exploration**  For a guided explorationof community data in the GEAR online tool, navigate to the GEAR [**Community Guide**](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1), and scroll down to the yellow box that reads: “Who are the people in your community?” Click on the arrow to expand the box, and work through the guided exploration. Click on the link to the [**Community Map**](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/60e419d78cb5493a91641ffa3c160dd6) and select your municipality in the dropdown box in the upper left to explore data for your community. |

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**Section 1. Consider these community attributes**

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| **Does your**  **community…** | **How can I find**  **this answer?** | **Your answer:** |
| **Does your community have any designated EJ neighborhoods? If so, which types?** | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) and/or the [Massachusetts EJ Viewer](https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=535e4419dc0545be980545a0eeaf9b53) |  |
| **Are there immigrant communities from a specific country or region of the world who live or work in your community?** | * Talk to people who work in the public school system * Visit houses of worship * Talk to labor groups * Talk to immigrant centers * Talk to employers in the service industry |  |
| **What languages other than English are predominantly spoken in your community?** | * Talk to people who work in the public school system * Talk to municipal departments like planning and public health * Visit houses of worship * Talk to labor groups * Talk to immigrant centers * Talk to employers in the service industry * Talk to centers that offer ESL classes |  |
| **Which indigenous nation’s homelands does your city or town sit on?** | * See [Native Land](http://native-land.ca) |  |
| **Are there any land areas of federally-recognized Tribes in your municipality?** | * See the US Bureau of Indian Affairs’ map of [Land Areas of Federally-Recognized Tribes](https://bia-geospatial-internal.geoplatform.gov/indianlands/) |  |

**Section 2. Note the presence of people or households in your community that have the following experiences**

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| **Note the presence**  **of people or households in your community that…** | **How can I find**  **this answer?** | **Your answer:** |
| **Live with a disability**  *Consider both physical and cognitive disabilities. Census data (in the GEAR) identifies serious difficulty with hearing, vision, cognition, and walking.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) * Talk to your [local Commission on Disability](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/commissions-on-disability#contact-your-local-commission-on-disability-) * Talk to your [local ADA Coordinator](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/contact-your-local-ada-coordinator) * Talk to home care providers who provide services in your area |  |
| **Live with a chronic illness**  *Consider a range of illnesses that may be common in your community, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health challenges.* | * See MA Department of Public Health’s [Health Topic Data](https://www.mass.gov/resource/health-topic-data) * Talk to home care providers who provide services in your area |  |
| **Have a low income**  *Note the presence of households whose income is equal to or less than 200% the federal poverty level. Also note any block groups that meet the EJ layer for income in your municipality. Consider including any other low-income metrics you have for your community.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) * Talk to schools, shelters, faith-based communities, and social services in your area * Talk to affordable housing providers in your area |  |
| **Experience housing insecurity**  *Consider housing affordability (housing cost burden) for renters and owners, as well as local data on houselessness or unstable or unsafe living conditions.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) * Talk to schools, shelters, faith-based communities, and social services * Talk to affordable housing providers in your area |  |
| **Are food insecure**  *Note the presence of households receiving public assistance, as well as local data on the use of food assistance programs and food pantries.* | * Talk to schools, shelters, faith-based communities, social services, and retail locations that accept SNAP and WIC |  |
| **Experience high energy (or utility) burden**  *Consider average annual energy costs for your area, average energy burden, and any local data on use of energy assistance programs.* | * See the US DOE’s Low-Income Energy Affordability Data ([LEAD](https://www.energy.gov/indianenergy/low-income-energy-affordability-data-lead-tool#:~:text=The%20Low%2DIncome%20Energy%20Affordability,entire%20United%20States%2C%20and%20now)) Tool * Talk to local energy assistance programs (such as ABCD, Valley Opportunity Council, Berkshire Community Action) |  |
| **Have limited internet access**  *Consider households that don’t have regular access to the internet and residents that rely primarily on mobile devices to access the internet.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Have limited transportation access**  *Consider households that don’t have access to a personal vehicle or that rely on public transportation.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) * Talk to elder service agencies, paratransit services, schools |  |
| **Have a high school diploma or less**  *Note the presence of residents that have a high school diploma or GED (and no college or postsecondary education) and the presence of residents that have less than a high school degree.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are limited English-speaking**  *Note the presence of residents who speak English less than “very well.”* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) * Talk to people who work in the public school system |  |
| **Are people of color**  *Note the presence of residents that are people of color, and what percentage are specifically:*  *- Black or African American*  *- Hispanic or Latino*  *- Asian*  *- American Indian or Alaska Native*  *- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are refugees or asylum seekers**  *Consider refugees or people seeking asylum in your community as well as neighboring communities.* | * Talk to schools * Talk to the MA Office for Refugees and Immigrants * Talk to your local agency responsible for refugee resettlement |  |
| **Are under 18 years of age**  *Note the presence of people under 18 years of age, as well as specifically ages 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-17.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are 65 years of age or older**  *Note the presence of people 65 and older. Also note the presence of people over 65 years of age and living alone.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) data layers on 65+ and 65+ living alone |  |
| **Are renters**  *Note the presence of residents that rent their home in your community.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are single-parent households**  *Note the presence of single-parent households in your community.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are households with a grandparent raising grandchild(ren)**  *Consider how common it is in your community for children to be raised by grandparents (particularly in situations where the parents are not present).* | * Talk to people who work in the public school system |  |
| **Are caregivers for elderly residents or residents with a disability**  *Consider how many people work in your community providing care to elderly residents or residents with a disability.* | * Talk to home care and home health agencies, your regional [Community Health Network](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/community-health-network-areas-chna-configuration), local community health centers |  |
| **Are without health insurance**  *Note the presence of people who do not have health insurance in your community or region.* | * See the GEAR [Community Guide](https://resilient.mass.gov/gear/Guide?guideId=1) |  |
| **Are seasonal workers**  *Consider how many people work in your community as seasonal workers (e.g., in agriculture, fishing, tourism).* | * Talk to seasonal employers * Talk to local chamber of commerce * Talk to the MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development’s Department of Economic Research |  |

**Section 3. What does this tell you?**

**3A**  It will be important that the people who will be most impacted by climate change participate in the development of resilience solutions. Based on the findings above, who in your community will be important to talk to about their experiences?

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**3B**  As you build your Core Team, what are the important Community Liaison relationships you will be looking for? For example, are you looking for a local advocate for people living with disabilities? A person who is well-known and respected within a non-English-speaking community?

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**3C**  What are some of the avenues for reaching these potential liaisons? Who do you know who could serve as an initial contact that could provide further introductions? Are there organizations, businesses, or community spaces you could reach out to or visit? What types of media outlets may be most useful?

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