



Evictions in Boston's Communities of Color: The First Year of The Pandemic



**CITY LIFE
VIDA URBANA**

Stand Up, Fight Back.

“Grassroots organizing and legislative interventions to stop Boston’s pandemic-era eviction crisis are necessary for racial justice.”

-Alex Ponte-Capellan, City Life/Vida Urbana

Boston’s communities of color are bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 eviction crisis.

- **70% of all Boston eviction filings** occurred in census tracts where the **majority of renters are people of color**, even though only 47% of all Boston rental housing is located in these neighborhoods.¹
 - **By contrast, 30% of eviction filings occurred in tracts with majority white renter populations**, even though 43% of all occupied Boston rental units are in these neighborhood.

In the first year of COVID-19, the eviction filing rate was more than **2 times higher** in Boston census tracts where most renters are people of color than in tracts where most renters are white.

- **64% of all eviction filings** occurred **Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park** - neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color - even though only 40% of all rental housing in Boston is located in these neighborhoods.

But Boston residents are organizing to keep their homes in the pandemic.

- City Life/Vida Urbana helped renters in **13 different Boston-area apartment buildings** form tenant unions during the first year of the pandemic; the trend was profiled in [The Boston Globe](#).

The COVID-19 Housing Equity bill (H. 1434/S. 891) in Massachusetts is critical to preventing non-emergency evictions in Boston in the pandemic.

- [The bill](#) will **prevent unjust and unsafe evictions during the pandemic and recovery period** in Boston and state-wide.



City Life/Vida Urbana is a grassroots organization that has been fighting in the Boston area for housing justice since 1973.

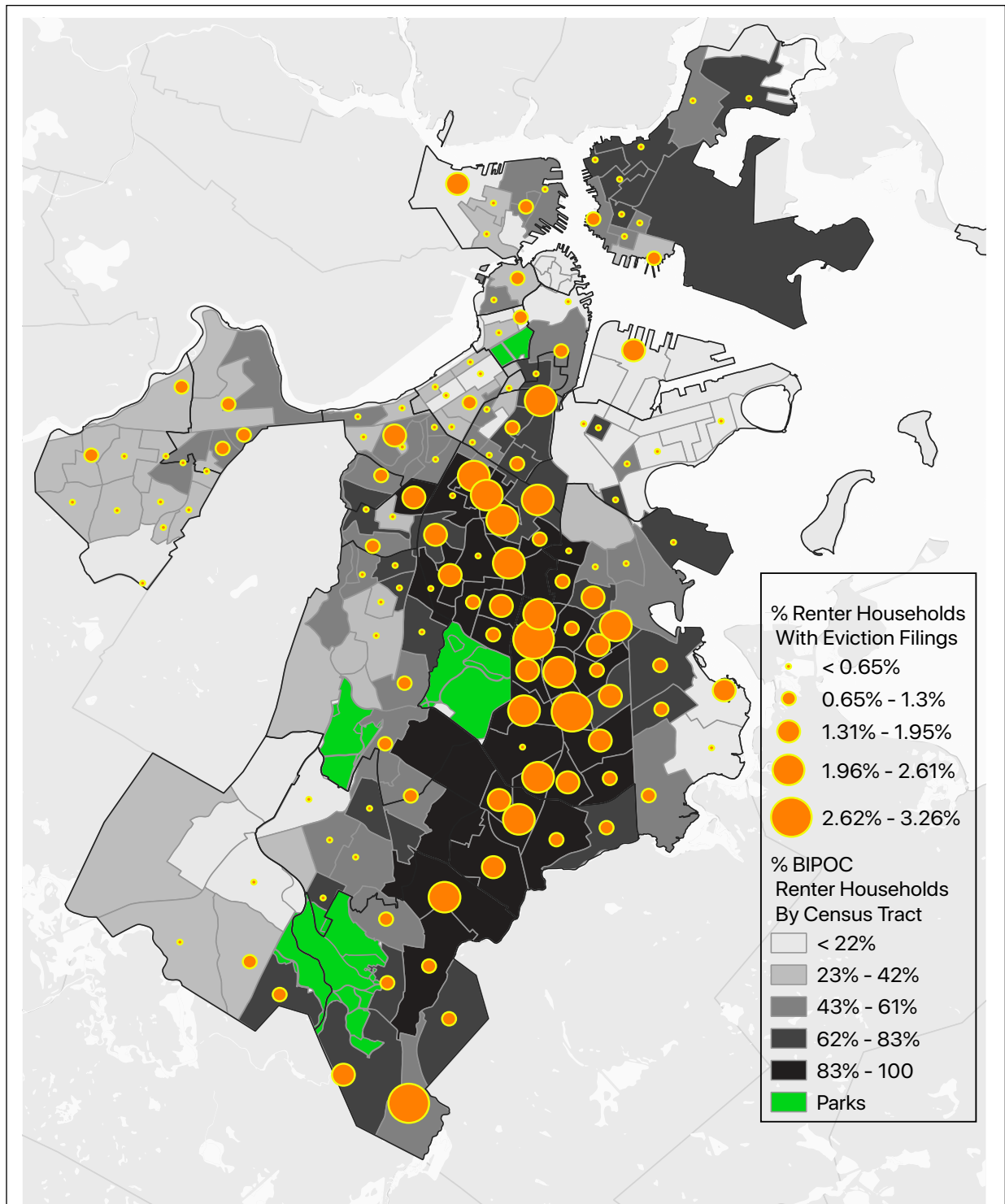


Download our 2020 report in collaboration with researchers from MIT, “Evictions in Boston: The Disproportionate Effects of Forced Moves on Communities of Color”, at [bostonevictions.org](#).



284 Amory St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
clvu.org
Housing Hotline: (617) 934-5006

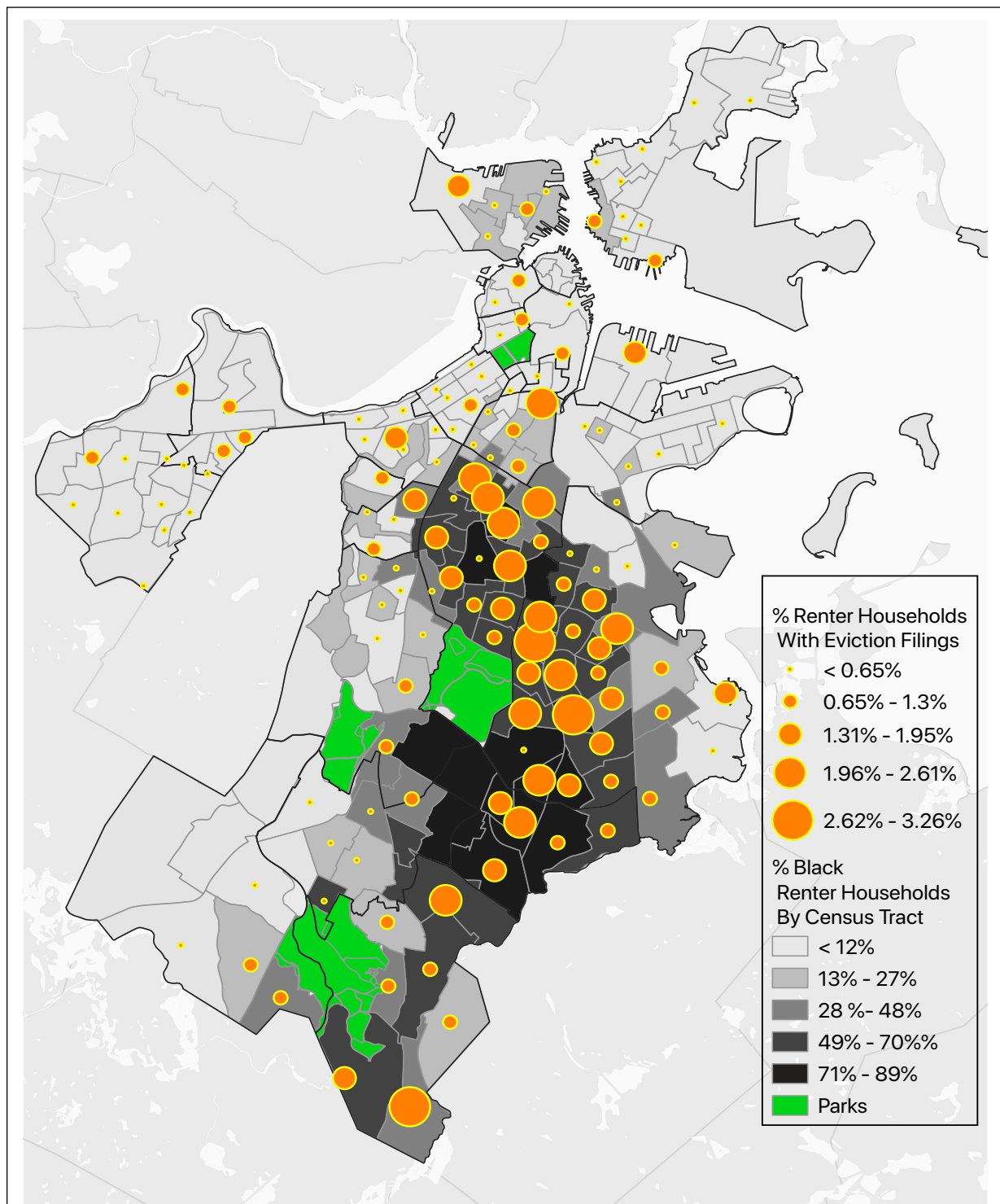
In the first year of the pandemic, Boston census tracts where the majority of renter households are occupied by people of color struggled against eviction rates **more than 2 times higher** than tracts where the majority of renters are white.



Eviction Filing Rate 2/28/2020 - 2/28/2021 Underlaid with Renter Households of Color

Author: Ben Walker
Sources: Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Access,
American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

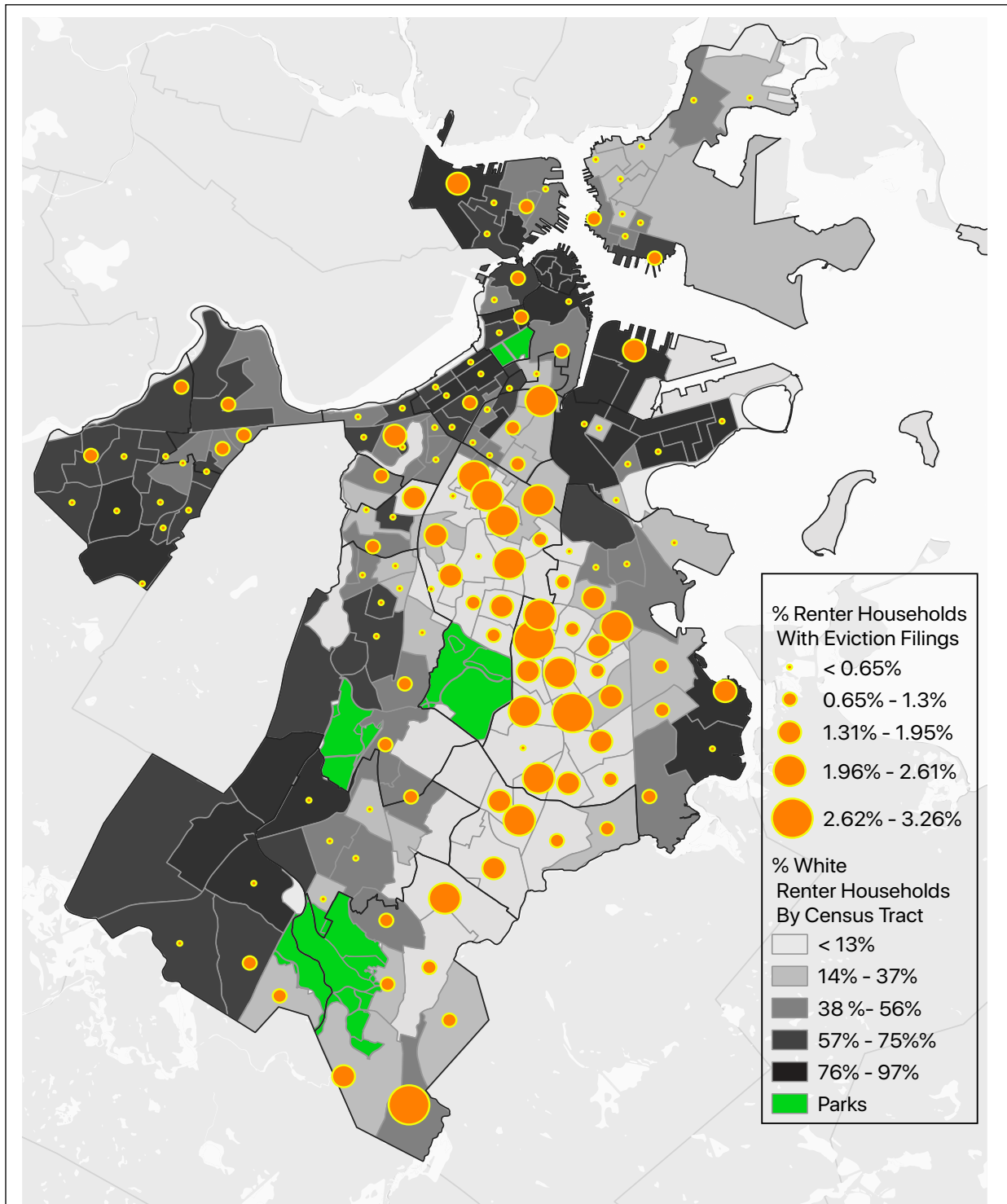
In Boston's census tracts where the majority of renters are Black, the average eviction filing rate is 3.8 times higher than the average filing rate in tracts where the majority of renters are white.



Eviction Filing Rate 2/28/2020 - 2/28/2021 Underlaid with Black Renter Households

Author: Ben Walker
Sources: Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Access,
American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

Boston census tracts where most renters are white were far less impacted by eviction filings than census tracts with predominantly Black renters.



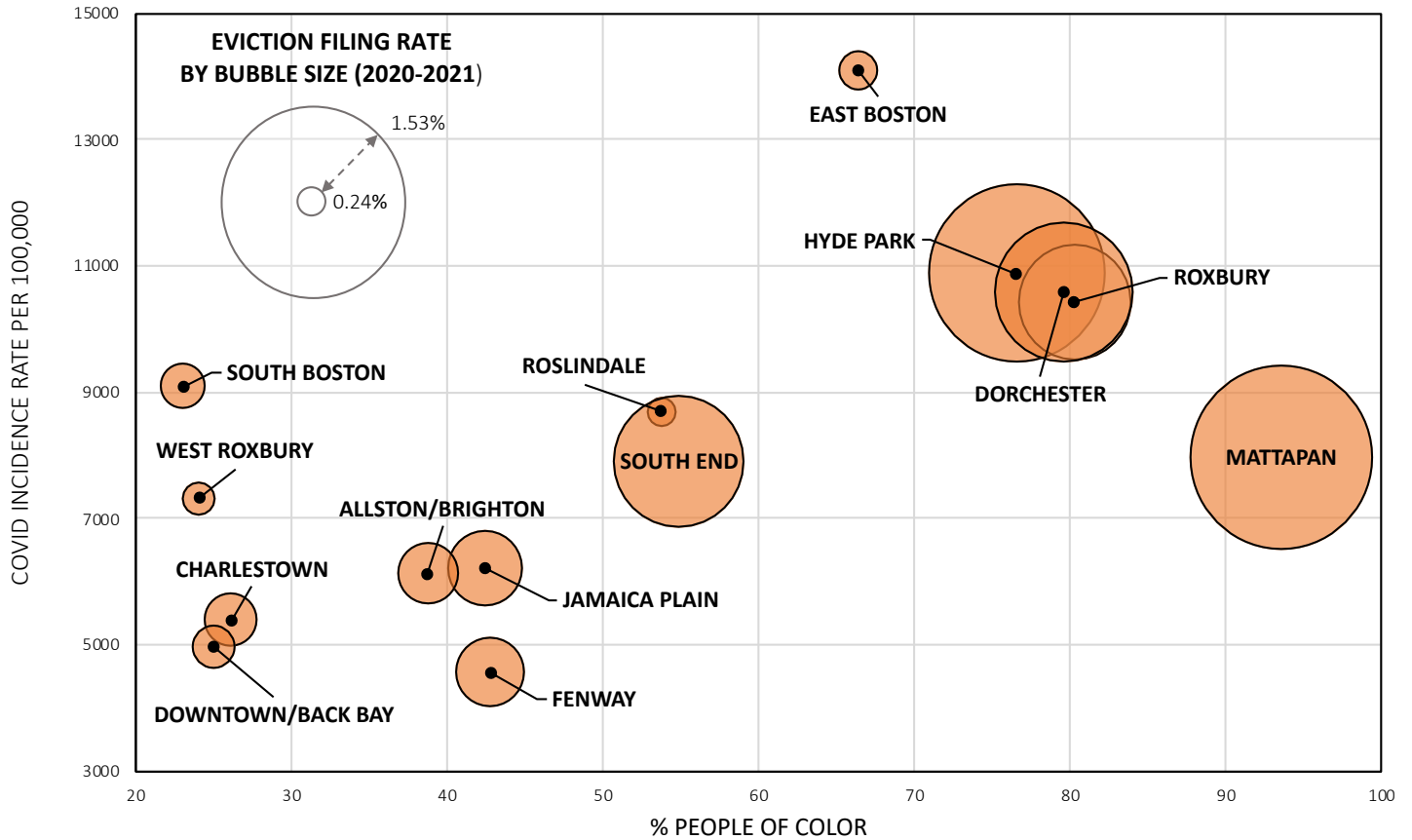
Eviction Filing Rate 2/28/2020 - 2/28/2021 Underlaid with White Renter Households

Author: Ben Walker
Sources: Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Access,
American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates

In the first year of the pandemic, four of the five Boston neighborhoods with the highest rates of eviction filings were majority people of color.

These neighborhoods - Hyde Park, Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan - also endured relatively high COVID-19 infection rates.

Eviction Filings, COVID Incidence, and People of Color by Boston Neighborhood



Author: Ben Walker, MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, 2021

Sources: Massachusetts Trial Court, Boston Public Health Commission, and American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-year estimate

1 A note about method: Eviction filing data was collected by hand from the Massachusetts Trial Court Electronic Case Access database, accessible at masscourts.org. For the purposes of this report, eviction filing data refers to available court records of eviction filings with recorded property addresses at the time of data collection.

Data does not reflect the official record of Trial Court. In general, court records significantly undercount the total number of evictions in Boston. These records do not include informal, illegal, or coerced kinds of displacement. Evictions in East Boston, for example, are probably significantly undercounted in this data. Boston's immigrant communities often rely on informal housing arrangements that place renters at high risk of illegal or informal eviction, which leave no formal record of displacement.

Also, available eviction filing records may contain information that is inaccurate or incomplete. We estimate, for example, that about 5.6% of publicly-available eviction filing records within the range of study did not contain address-level data at the time of collection. For these reasons, the total number of formal eviction filings in court during the pandemic was likely higher than suggested here.

Data analysis: Ben Walker, MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning (Master's of City Planning candidate), in collaboration with City Life/Vida Urbana. Special thanks to Laurie Goldman's class at Tufts University Department of Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning for support with data collection.

Cover photo: Marilyn Humphries, humphriesphotography.com