

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: THE 2021 BOSTON MAYORAL RACE

Last month, Boston broke a 200-year streak of exclusively white, male Mayors with Kim Janey's inauguration. Janey just announced her campaign for the full-term Mayoral seat, adding her candidacy to a historically diverse field that already included three City Councilors and women of color: Andrea Campbell, Annissa Essaibi George, and Michelle Wu.

The significance of this race:

- Boston has never had such a diverse field to hold the city's top Executive Office. For the first time, the field for Mayor will reflect the demographics of Boston, which is 52% women and 55% people of color.
- As City Councilors, each woman in this race has already made significant progress in a city with a political scene that Barbara Lee, founder and president of the Barbara Lee Family Foundation, calls the "original old boys club" for its insular and homogenous history.
- At the Barbara Lee Family Foundation, we've identified an "imagination barrier" that hinders voters from perceiving women as executive leaders. Kim Janey has chipped away at that barrier for Boston—and now Campbell, Essaibi George, Janey, and Wu's campaigns will continue to represent a new face of leadership for the city.

What research shows about the field:

- Barbara Lee Family Foundation research shows that the idea that women are not as electable as their male counterparts is a myth. However, women, and particularly women of color, are held to different, higher standards on the campaign trail than men.
 - While men are assumed to be qualified for office, women must prove their qualifications over and over again.
 - A woman candidate is held to dual gender stereotypes. She must demonstrate enough strength to be CEO of the city, without appearing “too tough” and jeopardizing likeability by straying from feminine norms.
 - Likeability is a non-negotiable for women. Voters will vote for a man they do not like, but will not do the same for a woman.
- There is no playbook for a woman of color Mayor of Boston. That means that each woman in this race can chart her own course. Our research shows that voters want a “360-degree candidate,” and that a candidate acting authentically and bringing her background to the campaign trail will resonate with Bostonians.
- Although sexism persists on the campaign trail, our latest research shows that voters view sexist incidents as a leadership test that a woman candidate can pass. And, a majority of voters acknowledge that sexism does exist in politics—signaling an awareness of the double standards women candidates are facing.



To speak with Barbara Lee Family Foundation Executive Director Amanda Hunter about our 20+ years of unique research on women in politics, and what it shows about the Boston Mayoral race, [contact us](#).

ABOUT THE BARBARA LEE FAMILY FOUNDATION:

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation works to advance women's equality and representation in American politics through political research, strategic partnerships, and grants and endowments. The Foundation's work is guided by its core belief that women's voices strengthen our democracy and enrich our culture.

