

Sebastian Olascoaga

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Professional Experience

City of Boston 2023–Present

Director of Research and Evaluation (2024–Present); ARPA Evaluation Lead (2023–2024)

Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT)

- Built the City’s Research & Evaluation function from solo to **3 direct reports**; raised **\$300K** in fresh funding.
- Created the City’s first Survey Unit, running representative surveys on quality of life and services, plus pulse and topical surveys spanning restaurant permitting, workforce GenAI adoption, and youth needs, among others.
- Led the first RCT ever fielded at the City of Boston — BidBot, a Retrieval-Augmented Generation procurement assistant; two-arm randomized design, jointly with HKS and HBS. Co-author on the working paper.
- Evaluated Boston’s Fare-Free Bus Pilot across **23.8M boardings** (2016–2025), estimating **21.3% (5.1M)** as program-attributable. As advisor on the ongoing MBTA renegotiation, modeled reimbursement structures projected to save the City **\$2.4M–\$3.6M** under the new terms.
- Design and run the City’s enterprise GenAI evaluation program, measuring output quality, adoption, and operational impact across rollouts of Claude, Gemini, and in-house RAG tools, with production pipelines that apply LLMs to the City’s own usage, classifying anonymized staff prompts into structured outputs.
- Evaluating whether Boston’s Proactive Rental Inspection Ordinance reaches the rental units it is meant to regulate; found **~27% (~50K units)** had never registered, leaving a large share of the rental stock outside the inspection system (in progress).

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (DUSP) Spring 2025

Lecturer

- Sole instructor, Spring 2025, MIT DUSP year-long graduate Master in City Planning economics sequence (*11.203 Microeconomics*, *11.202 Planning Economics*; ~70 students/cohort). Wrote all materials.

Redfin Summer/Fall 2021 and 2022

Economics Fellow

- Researcher and co-author on a 17.5M-user nationwide field experiment at Redfin measuring the causal impact of home-specific flood-risk disclosure on search, bidding, and purchase. **Buyers shifted to homes with 54% less flood risk; Redfin retained and expanded the feature platform-wide.** Published as NBER w33119; Revise and Resubmit at the *American Economic Review*.
- Co-designed a follow-up four-arm RCT (fire, heat, and wind risk scores) with Redfin’s product engineering and product management teams; led the analysis and writing (paper in writing). Treatment also retained in production at Redfin.
- Authored **8 Redfin News research articles** (2021–2022) on flood, wildfire, drought, deal dynamics, and climate-migration patterns in U.S. housing markets. Coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Bloomberg*, *The Hill*, *The Weather Channel*, *Yale Environment 360*, and other major outlets.

OptumLabs 2019–2021

Health Economist Visiting Fellow

- Lead author, *JAMA Network Open*: quasi-experimental analysis of state-level eviction-moratorium expiration on COVID-19 hazard in a 509K-person cohort drawn from OptumLabs’ 200M-record claims +

EHR universe. *NPR Marketplace* interviewed me about the paper, which was also covered by *MIT News* and *Brookings*.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (DUSP), Teaching 2019 & 2022
Head Teaching Assistant — 11.220 Quantitative Reasoning and Statistical Methods for Planning

- Sole Head TA both years; led TA teams of 3 (2019) and 5 (2022); received the course's all-time highest TA student rating (7/7) both years.

Mexico's Federal Treasury (SHCP) Sept 2015 – Aug 2018
Director of Economic Policy — Chief Economist's Office

- Reported to the Chief Economist; managed two analysts. Authored **12 quarterly briefings** to Mexico's Financial Stability Council (CESF) and contributed sections to the CESF Annual Report (2016–2018) and the macroeconomic-risks chapter of Mexico's annual federal economic-policy framework.
- Designed the fiscal-expenditure metrics framework used by SHCP to monitor public spending. The framework convinced decision-makers and credit rating agencies that Mexico's fiscal consolidation was on track.

Past Research & Policy Roles 2014–2015

- OECD, Paris (2014–2015) — Junior Researcher, Consultant
- Innovations for Poverty Action (2014) — Research Consultant

Past Research Assistantships 2010–2013

- Universidad Iberoamericana (2012–2013)
- El Colegio de México (COLMEX) (2011–2012)
- Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) (2010–2011)

Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology 2018–2023

- **Ph.D. in Urban Economics and Policy.** *Honors:* MIT Presidential (2018–2019) and Departmental (2019–2023) Fellowships.

Paris School of Economics (PSE) 2013–2015

- **M.S. in Applied Economics.** *Honors:* Graduated *Summa Cum Laude*.

Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) 2008–2012

- **B.A. in Economics.** *Honors:* Highest national score on Mexico's standardized economics exit examination.

Skills

- **Programming & statistical:** R, Python, SQL, Stata. AWS (S3, Redshift, Bedrock); Snowflake. Production-grade LLM API integration (Claude, Anthropic SDK) with structured outputs.
- **Causal inference & experimentation:** A/B testing and online field experiments; quasi-experimental methods; heterogeneous treatment effects; bootstrap inference; survival modeling; time-series forecasting; power calculations and preregistration.
- **Applied microeconomics, housing, & spatial analysis:** hedonic pricing models; willingness-to-pay recovery via discrete-choice instruments; cost-benefit analysis; spatial econometrics, GIS workflows, and mapping for housing, regulation, and policy data.

- **Applied LLM and generative AI:** Evaluation of production GenAI systems — output quality, adoption, downstream RCT impact. Led the first city-government LLM RCT. Built production prompt-classification pipelines with PII anonymization. Designed a representative silicon-sampling methodology.
- **Survey methodology:** probability and non-probability sampling design; stratified, multi-stage, and adaptive designs; raking and post-stratification weighting; weighted multiplier bootstrap for non-probability variance estimation (own contribution); cognitive pre-testing.
- **Languages:** Native Spanish; fluent English; fluent French.

Selected Publications

- Fairweather, D., Kahn, M. E., Metcalfe, R. D., & Sandoval-Olascoaga, S. (2024). *Expecting Climate Change: A Nationwide Field Experiment in the Housing Market*. NBER Working Paper No. w33119. **Revise and Resubmit, *American Economic Review***.
- Sandoval-Olascoaga, S., Venkataramani, A., & Arcaya, M. (2021). Eviction Moratoria Expiration and COVID-19 Infection Risk Across Strata of Health and Socioeconomic Status in the United States. *JAMA Network Open*, 4(8), e2129041.
- Shu, E. G., Porter, J. R., Hauer, M. E., Sandoval-Olascoaga, S., Gourevitch, J., Wilson, B., ... & Kearns, E. (2023). Integrating climate change induced flood risk into future population projections. *Nature Communications*, 14(1), 7870.
- Sandoval-Olascoaga, S., Shu, E., & Porter, J. (2025). Flood risk and property value changes: understanding the impact of climate event exposure in the context of population change. *Frontiers in Environmental Economics*, 4, 1615802.

Full publication list at [Google Scholar](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=sebastian-olascoaga) and sebastian-olascoaga.com/papers.

Selected Awards & Fellowships

- Stakeholder Advisory Board — Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, *NIEHS Center for Environmental Health* (2024–Present)
- Contributor to Boston’s first Bloomberg Philanthropies “What Works Cities” Gold certification (2024)
- First Street Foundation Fellow (2022–2024)
- OptumLabs Fellow (2019–2021)
- MIT Presidential and Departmental Fellowships (2018–2023)