

# Zachary Esses Johnson, J.D., M.P.P., M.Sc.

Housing Policy — Fiscal & Tax Analysis — Institutional Measurement — Quantitative Research

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## Professional Summary

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Policy researcher specializing in housing economics, fiscal policy, and state and local taxation, with additional expertise in cross-country institutional measurement and quantitative methods. Track record of publishing policy-relevant work on housing markets, tax policy, and governance, with experience translating complex empirical findings into clear, actionable recommendations for practitioners, legislators, and non-technical audiences. Combined legal, policy, and quantitative training enables rigorous assessment of regulatory frameworks, fiscal systems, and market outcomes.

## Education

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<b>Doctor of Philosophy (ABD), Political Science</b> University of Virginia <i>Concentration: Comparative Political Economy &amp; Quantitative Methods</i>	2023 – 2028 (expected)
<b>Master of Public Policy</b> University of Southern California <i>Sol Price School of Public Policy</i>	2021 – 2023
<b>Master of Science, Behavioural Science</b> London School of Economics and Political Science	2020 – 2021
<b>Juris Doctor</b> University of British Columbia <i>Called to the Bar of British Columbia (2018)</i>	2014 – 2017
<b>Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, Political Science</b> University of Manitoba	2011 – 2014

## Professional Experience

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<b>Lead Quantitative Methodologist</b> , Karsh Institute for Democracy University of Virginia <i>Democracy and Capitalism Index Project</i>	2024 – Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Designed and built a global institutional quality index</b> across 170+ countries using multi-level principal components analysis, measuring economic freedom, property rights, rule of law, regulatory quality, and market efficiency; results disseminated to academic, business, and policy audiences.</li></ul>	
<b>State Tax Intern</b> , The Tax Foundation Washington, DC	Summer 2023
<b>Associate Lawyer</b> , Legacy Tax + Trust Lawyers Vancouver, Canada	2018 – 2020
<b>Articling Student</b> , DLA Piper LLP Vancouver, Canada	2017 – 2018

## Selected Publications & Policy Work

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### Housing & Political Economy:

- **The Impact of Vacancy Taxes on Housing Prices: A Synthetic Control Study.** SocArXiv (2026).
- **Diffusion of Violent Political Protest – Geographic Evidence from Bangladesh.** SocArXiv (2025).

### Tax Policy:

- **State and Local Sales Tax Rates, Midyear 2023.** The Tax Foundation.
- **Sales Tax Holidays By State, 2023.** The Tax Foundation.

### Legal & Behavioural Research:

- **Laws and Social Norms: Forces for Behaviour Change.** London School of Economics.
- **“Till Death Do Us Part – Hopefully”: Planning in Uncertain Times** (with Lauren Blake). Continuing Legal Education Society of British Columbia.

## Papers Under Review

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**Sequential Confirmatory Factor Analysis: A Novel Approach to Latent Variable Measurement.** SocArXiv. Novel statistical method for index construction and measurement validation applicable to country risk and institutional scoring.

**Can Social Democratic Parties Attract Left-Authoritarian Voters? Evidence from Election Simulations in the Netherlands, 1994–2021** (with Kirill Zhirkov).

**Trust Factors Across Faith Lines: Muslim-American Trust in Catholic Healthcare Providers** (with Margaret Tait, Robert Brehm, and Kerissa MacPherson).

## Conference Presentations

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<b>Midwest Political Science Association</b>	2025, 2026
<b>UVA Computational Research Exhibition</b>	2026
<b>Southern Political Science Association</b>	2025
<b>Academyhealth Annual Research Meeting (Two Papers)</b>	2022

## Awards

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<b>Travel Grants</b> , University of Virginia \$750	2025, 2026
<b>Bob Biller Award for Best Capstone Project</b> , University of Southern California Finalist	2023
<b>Sol Price School of Public Policy Scholarship</b> , University of Southern California \$60,000	2021
<b>Research Award</b> , University of Manitoba	2015

\$6,000

**Margaret Ogrodnick Memorial Prize**, University of Manitoba  
\$500

2014

## Additional Experience

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**Instructor, R Statistical Computing Tutorial**, University of Virginia 2025 – Present

**Teaching Assistant**, University of Virginia 2024 – Present

**Research Assistant**, University of Virginia Department of Politics 2023 – Present

**Editorial Assistant**, American Journal of Political Science 2023 – 2025

## Software & Technical Skills

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`sovereign_debt_xl`: PyXLL Excel add-in exposing Python UDFs for sovereign debt analysis — debt sustainability modeling, yield curve forecasting, rolling averages, and portfolio indexing.

**Tools:** Python, R, Stata, SQL, Excel/PyXLL, Tableau, Git, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X