



FIVE-YEAR IMPACT REPORT 2015-2020

NOVEMBER 9, 2020





RESEARCH PRIORITIES

As outlined in the examples below, we have supported a range of research efforts over the past five years that directly align with the Institute's priorities. We prioritize projects that have the potential to effect real-world policy change and drive important conversations about the future of young adults.

Featured Research Projects

TRANSPARENCY IN STATE BUDGETING

How can we improve state budgeting and transparency in the states?

The Institute is partnering with The Volcker Alliance, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker and 11 other universities, to produce the "Truth and Integrity in State Budgeting" project, a 50-state analysis scrutinizing state budgeting practices. Through this work, we have had the opportunity to weigh in on how state governments enact their budgets and how this may have important implications for younger generations (e.g. how states have chosen to deal with their public pension obligations).

(Lead Researcher: Sarah Swanbeck, Executive Director)

Publication: *Truth and Integrity in State Budgeting: Preventing the Next Fiscal Crisis*

PENSIONS IN THE TRENCHES

To what degree are pension costs crowding out government services? (cont.)

Budgeting for the Future

A part of the Institute's mission is to advance knowledge about how young people fare in our current budget environment. Older generations are living longer, and shifting demographics mean that there are fewer working-adults supporting a growing elderly population. Likewise, healthcare costs have increased, meaning supporting an aging population is getting more expensive. Budgets at every level – federal, state, and local – have been affected by these health care costs as well as the growing costs in public pensions. Investments in education, infrastructure, and other government services have been squeezed to accommodate these growing costs. With public budgets increasingly strained, how can governments continue to make investments in future generations, strengthen the social safety net, and ensure the long-term sustainability of government programs for generations to come?

Many experts argue that U.S. local governments are experiencing dramatic increases in their pension expenditures and that pension spending is crowding out government services. Others maintain that serious pension problems are limited to a few governments. For this project, researchers analyzed a new dataset of the annual pension expenditures of over 400 municipalities and counties from 2005 to 2016. They find that pension expenditures have risen almost everywhere, leading to significant crowding out in many cities and towns—instead of responding to growing pension costs by increasing revenue, most local governments have instead shrunk their workforce.

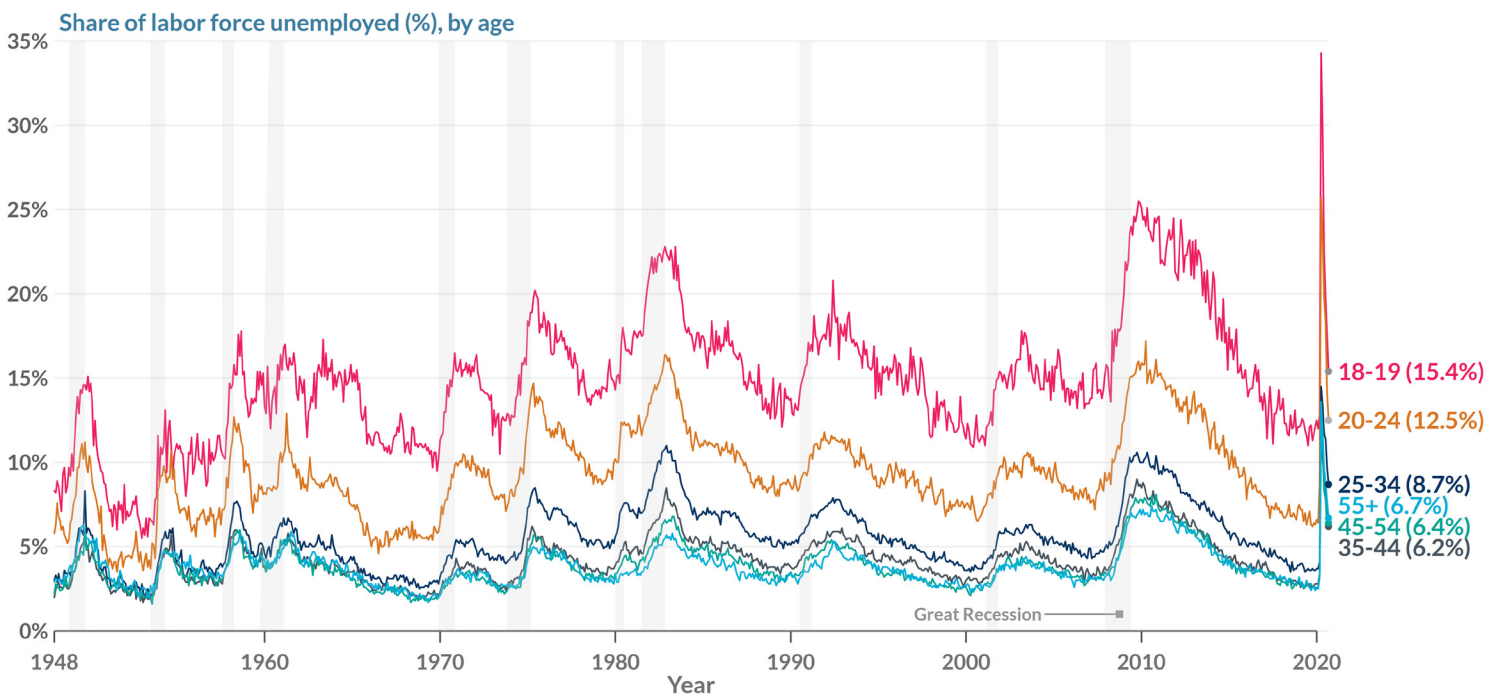
(Lead Researcher: Professor Sarah Anzia, Faculty Director)

Publication: *Pensions in the Trenches: How Pension Spending is Affecting U.S. Local Government*

Economic and Social Change

A growing body of research shows that the millennial and Gen Z generations may be worse off financially than their parents. Where previous generations saw improvements in economic mobility from one generation to the next, these younger generations have stalled—they have lower incomes and fewer assets than their parents did at the same age. The Institute seeks to better understand the changing nature of the labor market for young adults, with research on issues like the effects of economic recessions on young adults, the rise of the gig economy, and the evolving employee-employer relationship.

Unemployment Highest Among Youngest Groups and Getting Worse Over Time



Source: Author's analysis of data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
 Sample: U.S. civilian residents in the labor force, 18 or older.
 Notes: Seasonally adjusted. Recession dating from the National Bureau of Economic Research. The unemployment rate is defined as the share of the labor force without a job and actively looking for work.



Featured Research Projects:

UNEMPLOYMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

The pandemic-driven economic crisis has revealed longstanding and profound weaknesses in our social safety net. In economic downturns such as this one, research shows that some of the most vulnerable groups are the same groups left out of Unemployment Insurance (UI), such as working college students, low wage and tipped workers, contract workers, and some immigrants. We are developing a microsimulation model for UI, with a focus on the equity implications of the UI program. We are investigating the distributional impacts of UI, and how the UI system can be reformed to improve equity outcomes.

(Lead Researchers: James Hawkins, Associate Director; Sarah Swanbeck, Executive Director)

YOUNG ADULTS IN POVERTY

This research provided the first clear-cut demonstration that the number of young people (ages 18-24) living in poverty has increased significantly over the last several decades, with young adults among the most poverty-prone age groups since the onset of the Great Recession. Researchers find that a lack of a social safety net

for 18-24-year-olds is a major factor in young adult poverty.”

(Lead Researcher: James Hawkins, Associate Director)

Publication: *The Rise of Young Adult Poverty in the US*

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INDEX

How did the Great Recession Affect the Economic Trajectory of Millennials?

For this project, researchers produced an Economic Opportunity Index to better measure the economic mobility of young people during and after the Great Recession. The Index measures changes in key indicators including college education, health insurance, employment, affordable housing, and income from 2007 until 2016. Researchers found that while young people have seen gains in education and health care coverage since the onset of the Great Recession, young people have fared worse than older generations when it comes to affordable housing and income.”

(Lead Researchers: James Hawkins, Associate Director; Erin Heys, Policy Director)

Publication: *The Generational Squeeze: Young Californians’ Financial Outlook in the Wake of the Great Recession*



Political & Civic Engagement

“Youth engagement with civic institutions shapes their futures. We explore young people’s unique perspectives, and we identify ways that they can better engage in the democratic process to achieve their goals.

Featured Research Projects

NOT THE USUAL SUSPECTS: EXPLAINING PATTERNS OF VOTER TURNOUT AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Despite widespread concern about the low voter turnout of young Americans, very little political science research focuses on those factors predicting their turnout. This brief shows that some well-known predictors of voter turnout in U.S. national elections do not do well at predicting the voting behavior of 18-to-29-year olds. Union membership, homeownership, and being employed matter for middle age voters, but not for young people. Marital status and stock ownership barely affect their turnout. Instead, young people are galvanized by more personal and idiosyncratic factors. Disapproval of President Trump in 2018, for example, predicted much higher turnout. It seems possible that the usual set of predictors primarily reflect integration into society over the life-cycle through marriage, stock ownership, employment, homeownership, and family income.

(Lead Researchers: Professor Sarah Anzia, Faculty Director; James Hawkins, Associate Director)

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS OF THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

In the extraordinary time of COVID-19, the traditional U.S. liberal welfare state model has been upended; in response to the pandemic, we have seen unprecedented government investment in the market and safety net. With 2020 being an important election year, cultural shifts in values and attitudes toward government may influence who will lead and shape the contours of the country’s recovery in the years to come.

(Lead Researcher: Erin Heys, Policy Director)

GOVERN FOR AMERICA

Do public sector jobs change political attitudes among the young?

In collaboration with Govern for America—a nonprofit that connects college graduates with public sector jobs—researchers are following young job applicants to measure how experiencing a government job affects young people’s attitudes toward the role of government and public service.

(Lead Researcher: Professor Elizabeth Linos, Faculty Affiliate)

POLICY AND ENGAGEMENT

Advisory Board

In the spring of 2020, the Institute formed an advisory board to guide its research and policy agenda. The advisors are established and respected young leaders in government, research, and youth advocacy in California and nationally who bring a wealth of knowledge about the challenges that young adults face in the modern economy and the policy solutions that may help offset generational inequalities. As experts in state policy, research, and youth engagement, the advisory board members serve as strategic partners, providing professional expertise and guidance to develop the Institute's research agenda, to define a policy agenda that invests in young adults, and to broaden the Institute's network of youth organizers working to enact social change.

[Meet the Institute's Advisory Board here.](#)

Events

Annual Millennial Summit

The Institute's annual Millennial Summit brings together a diverse group of young leaders from across California to talk about the most pressing issues that the next generation is facing.

Housing Policy Speaker Series

In 2020, we partnered with the Turner Center on Housing Innovation at UC Berkeley to host a speaker series covering California's housing crisis. Over the course of the spring, over 300 students, faculty, industry representatives, and community members engaged in conversation with invited panelists.

A Generation Under Pressure: Talking Mental Health at UC Berkeley

In April 2019, the Institute sponsored a campus-wide mental health event, featuring UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ. Over 400 individuals attended the event, with strong turnout from students, campus administrators, and community members. The event was covered by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *DailyCal*.



PODCAST

TALK POLICY TO ME

Because #policyispersonal

Featuring young alumni, policymakers, and advocates, engaging in conversations about public policy and its impact on people's lives, the Institute's podcast – *Talk Policy to Me* – is in the middle of its fourth season. The podcast is a bi-weekly program featuring several student hosts discussing the most critical policy stories of the day, in a way that is digestible to the average listener.



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IN THE NEWS

Selected media coverage

(4/22/20 CalMatters) [It's time to take a hard look at tax reform for California's future](#)

(4/6/2020 California Healthline) [Young people weigh pain of job loss against risks of virus](#)

(Winter 2020 Education Next) [How Teach for America affects beliefs about education](#)

(8/28/19 CalMatters) [Lawmakers must do more to fund mental health care at the University of California. Here's how to get the money](#)

(6/26/2019 MentalFloss) [26 amazing facts about millennials](#)

(6/7/19 DailyCal) [Young adults among most 'poverty-prone' age groups, UC Berkeley research center finds](#)

(6/7/19 Bustle Magazine) [Statistics on young adults & poverty show a startling trend over the past decade](#)

(6/7/19 Vice News) [Young people are poorer than ever and government programs are failing them](#)

(6/5/19 Berkeley News) [Number of young people facing poverty has increased over the last decade](#)

(5/25/19 Yahoo Finance) [Why bad parents and tech may be to blame for anxious millennials](#)

(4/22/19 SF Chronicle) [Rising anxiety on campuses linked to finances, phones in UC Berkeley study](#)

(4/19/19 Daily Cal) [Panelists, study expose culture of anxiety at UC Berkeley](#)

(3/12/19 Salon) [Here's how Millennials' \\$1 trillion in debt is affecting their lives](#)

salon

UCLA students demonstrate after board members voted to approve a 32 percent tuition hike the following year on November 19, 2009 (Getty/David McNew)

Here's how Millennials' \$1 trillion in debt is affecting their lives

Given bleak economic prospects, depression is on the rise for Millennials

view in app

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WHO WE ARE

The Berkeley Institute for Young Americans (the Institute) was founded in 2015 to bring together scholars at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, and around the country, to address issues of generational inequity in a fact-based and non-ideological fashion. The central purpose of the Institute is to address a key question:

How can we ensure that public spending invests fairly in future generations so that young people will have ample opportunities for successful and productive lives?

The Institute ties together three strengths of the Goldman School and UC Berkeley — a concern with budgets and the budgetary process; expertise in entitlements, pensions, and social welfare programs; and work on labor markets and economic change. The Institute focuses on both ideas and action. It is the only public university-affiliated research center working to fully understand the challenges that young Americans face, with a focus on systems-level change. The Institute brings together the young and old, left and right, and activists and academics to set a comprehensive policy agenda that will invest in future generations.

Vision

The Berkeley Institute for Young Americans seeks to make public policy sustainable and fair across generations.

Mission

The Institute's mission is to lead a fact-based, non-partisan discussion about how best to invest in future generations. We aim to develop research-driven policy proposals to equip policymakers, advocates, and young leaders with the solutions needed to ensure the long-term security and success of the next generation.

The Institute's Key Objectives

Objective 1: Become a Leader for Research on Young Americans

We produce high caliber research that identifies economic, social, and political trends that are unique to young generations. We support projects that advance knowledge about the challenges that young adults face, as well as programs that can support greater generational equity.

Objective 2: Produce Policy Impact in California and Beyond

We design research-driven policy proposals to equip policymakers, advocates, and young



leaders with the solutions needed to ensure the long-term security of the next generation.

Objective 3: Engage Young Leaders

We host events and seminars to bring together young leaders, academics, policymakers, and other key stakeholders to engage with the latest research and policy developments affecting young Americans.

OUR TEAM



Sarah Anzia, Faculty Director

Sarah Anzia is an Associate Professor with a shared appointment in

Berkeley's Political Science department and the Goldman School of Public Policy. A Political Scientist, she studies American politics with a focus on state and local government, elections, interest groups, political parties, and public policy. Her book, *Timing and Turnout: How Off-Cycle Elections Favor Organized Groups*, examines how the timing of elections can be manipulated to affect both voter turnout and the composition of the electorate, which, in turn, affects election outcomes and public policy. She also studies the role of government employees and public-sector unions in elections and policymaking in the U.S. In addition, she has written about the politics of public pensions, women in politics, the historical development of electoral institutions, and the power of political party leaders in state legislatures. She has a Ph.D. in political science from Stanford University and an Master in Public Policy. from the Harris School at the University of Chicago.



**Sarah
Swanbeck,
Executive
Director**

Sarah Swanbeck is a public policy analyst with

expertise in California state and local governance and budget issues. She previously worked in Legislative Affairs for California Common Cause, a nonprofit that advocates for more open, honest, and accountable government. While at Common Cause, she successfully advocated for important changes to the state's campaign finance laws as well as the first ever substantive reform to California's century-old initiative process. Outside the realm of California politics, Sarah has spent years working as a policy analyst on both state and local issues. As an analyst for the Controller in San Francisco, she worked with a range of city departments to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their services. She also previously worked for the Public Policy Institute of California and the California Public Utilities Commission on state energy and water policy. She holds a Master in Public Policy from the Goldman School at UC Berkeley and a BA in Economics from Wellesley College.



**Erin Heys,
Policy Director**

Erin Heys recently completed a PhD program in Education Policy at Berkeley. Her

dissertation research examined policy paradigms in education with a focus on the school accountability debate. While at Berkeley, Erin was engaged with student organizations on campus and was the federal legislative director for the Graduate Assembly. She also worked for the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at Berkeley to promote faculty research on topics related to the labor market and the economy. Prior to graduate school, Erin spent several years working for the nonprofit evaluation firm, MDRC, where she was a qualitative researcher and studied programs to improve student access and success at community colleges. In addition to her PhD, Erin holds a Master in Education from UC Berkeley, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Minnesota.



**James
Hawkins,
Associate
Director**

James Hawkins is a policy researcher with

experience in environmental and economic policy. His interests at the Institute include examining public policies designed to expand opportunities for young people in today's labor market, as well as tomorrow's. During his graduate studies, James completed work spanning efforts to improve voter knowledge of electoral candidates and an evaluation of potential policies for large expansions of the social safety net. During his tenure at the environmental non-profit Heal the Ocean, he led policy campaigns focused on building the case for recycled water as a green water supply alternative. He received his BA in Political Science and Environmental Studies from UC Santa Barbara and his Master in Public Policy from the Goldman School at UC Berkeley.



**Daniel Tan,
Research
Associate**

Daniel is a policy researcher with experience in health and social

safety net policy. During his undergraduate studies, he worked as a research assistant for several economics professors and developed expertise in microeconomic concepts.

Daniel previously worked at the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to improve public policy in California through research. While at PPIC, he contributed to research in topics such as health, housing, and the role of safety net programs in poverty alleviation. At the Berkeley Institute for Young Americans, Daniel provides key research support on a project to develop a microsimulation model for Unemployment Insurance. He received his BA in Economics from Pomona College.

UC Berkeley Faculty Affiliates

- *Professor Alan Auerbach, Economics*
- *Dean Henry Brady, Goldman School of Public Policy*
- *Assistant Professor Elizabeth Linos, Goldman School of Public Policy*
- *Assistant Professor Jonas Meckling, Environmental Science, Policy, and Management*
- *Assistant Professor Cecilia Mo, Political Science*
- *Professor Jesse Rothstein, Goldman School of Public Policy and Economics*