

ANNUAL REPORT

2021





The Berkeley Institute for Young Americans is a research center affiliated with the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. The Institute was founded in 2015 to bring together scholars from the Goldman School, the UC Berkeley campus, and across the country to address issues of generational equity in a fact-based, nonpartisan manner. The Institute aims 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.



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WHO WE ARE



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

MISSION



The Institute's mission is to lead a fact-based, non-partisan discussion about how best to invest in future generations, while promoting bold leadership among the millennial and Gen Z populations. 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.

OBJECTIVES



Become a Leader for Research on Young Americans

We produce research that identifies economic, social, and political trends that are unique to young generations, and we aim to advance knowledge about the investments that could support greater generational equity.

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.

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.

FEATURED RESEARCH

The Institute joins the California 100 Initiative

California 100 is a new statewide initiative to bring together a network of government leaders, academic researchers, industry partners, philanthropists, nonprofits, and youth organizers to provide a long-term vision and plan for the state over the next century.



- The Institute was awarded a grant to envision the future of education in California.

The Institute's project, in collaboration with Berkeley's Graduate School of Education, will address three aspects of the state's education system that have undergone significant transformations in recent years: governance, school finance, and technology. The report will address the past and current innovations in each of these areas, and will identify challenges and equity issues across California's early care and learning, K-12, and higher education systems.

Improving the Unemployment Insurance system for young adults

This project, funded through a COVID-19 related grant solicitation from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is a timely expansion of the Institute's microsimulation analysis work. This research will produce a model of the U.S. unemployment system in order to help policymakers understand current deficiencies in the unemployment insurance system for various groups, including young adults. This will help inform policy options to guide permanent reform of the unemployment insurance system. This project will include an open publication of our codebase and results via a partnership with the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences.

A new perspective on generational values and views of the safety net

This qualitative study is a follow-up to a poll that the Institute conducted last year to study generational values and attitudes toward the social safety net. It is well known that younger generations have a more favorable view of government programs and services than older generations, but researchers have yet to determine what underlying values are driving those views. As part of this study, the Institute recently completed 65 phone interviews with participants from different generational cohorts across the U.S.

Issue Brief: Young Adults & the Affordable Housing Crisis

The impacts of rising housing costs are particularly salient among young people in California. Young adults, especially Millennials, are more likely to rent and less likely to own a home than older generations. This issue brief focuses on the challenges facing young people in balancing the increasing cost of housing in California with stagnating wages and economic hardship. It also discusses policy efforts at the state and federal levels to support renters during the pandemic.

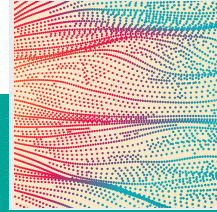
Issue Brief: Young Adults & the Social Safety Net During COVID-19

Young adults have come of age during several major U.S. economic downturns — first with the DotCom tech bubble bust of the early 2000s followed by the financial crisis and housing market collapse during the 2008 Great Recession. Now, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults once again are facing the highest unemployment rates of any age group with mounting financial pressures in an uncertain economy. In response to such challenges, this issue brief explores weaknesses in the current social safety net and how it could be strengthened to better support young adults, especially during the current COVID-19 recession.

Working Paper: Information about Youth Voter Suppression Fails to Induce Significant Voter Backlash

The past decade has been marked by a wave of youth suppression laws, primarily implemented by Republican-controlled legislatures. Youth voter suppression—primarily but not solely directed at college students—has been documented by journalists, legal scholars, and advocacy organizations. This working paper shows that information about ongoing attempts to disenfranchise young Americans induces anger and psychological reactance, which in turn increases people's intentions to vote. However, after controlling for anger and reactance, information about youth suppression also has a negative direct impact on people's turnout intentions. These indirect and direct results effectively cancel each other out, resulting in a statistically insignificant total effect on turnout in general, and youth turnout in particular.

TALK POLICY TO ME: A STUDENT-LED PODCAST



Talk Policy to Me is a podcast featuring young alumni, policymakers, and advocates discussing public policy and its impact on people's lives. The podcast is a bi-weekly program produced and hosted by students from the Goldman School and the Journalism School. It's a podcast that aims to highlight the personal side of public policy while providing young listeners with important information on economic and policy issues that most affect them.

Featured Episodes

Episode 501: Talking "Your Neighbor, the Bounty Hunter"

In this episode, host Amy Benziger explores the new wave of "rights suppressing laws" with New York Times Op-Ed writers and legal scholars Jon Michaels and David Noll.

Episode 410: Tok Policy To Me—Youth Political Mobilization through TikTok

In this episode, which was written and recorded in the aftermath of the November 2020 election, host Noah Cole spoke with Aidan Kohn-Murphy and Toni Akande, two of the teens who run the "Gen Z for Change" TikTok page. Aidan and Toni touched on how they used traditional organizing practices to get out the vote through TikTok in the last election cycle, the tradeoffs between producing popular and substantive political content, and where they think the future of online political mobilization is headed.

Episode 504: Talking Vaccine Deniers: A Workshop in Persuasive Communication

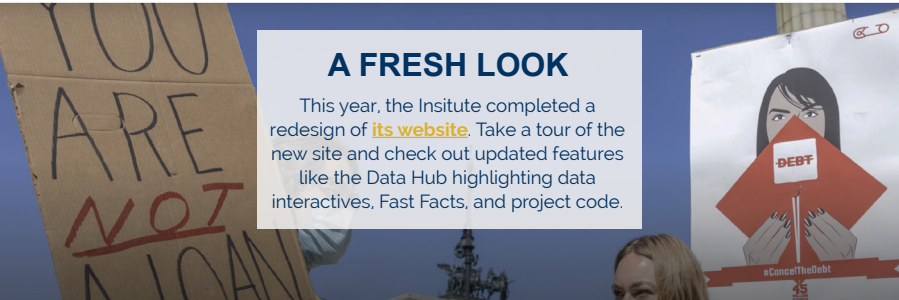
In this episode, host Noah Cole talks to psychologist and behavioral scientist Philipp Schmid and public health expert and data scientist Crystal Son about the do's and don'ts of effective vaccine communication.

50,153 Unique Downloads



A FRESH LOOK

This year, the Insitute completed a redesign of [its website](#). Take a tour of the new site and check out updated features like the Data Hub highlighting data interactives, Fast Facts, and project code.



OUR TEAM

STAFF

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. 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 an MPP from the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley and a BA in Economics from Wellesley College.

Erin Heys, Policy Director and Senior Researcher

Erin Heys received her PhD in Education Policy from UC Berkeley, and brings over a decade of experience engaging in education and social policy research in California and nationally. While a graduate student at Berkeley, Erin was the federal legislative director for the Graduate Assembly to advance issues of equity and access in higher education at the level of federal policy. Prior to graduate school, Erin spent several years working for the nonprofit social policy research organization, MDRC, where she studied community colleges in California and across the U.S. In addition to her PhD, Erin holds a Master's degree in Education from 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. 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. This work included publication of a white paper on a novel form of advanced water recycling and a comprehensive analysis of the potential for recycled water production from coastal wastewater treatment plants in California. During his graduate studies, James completed an evaluation of potential policies for large expansions of the social safety net. His interests at BIFYA include examining public policies designed to expand opportunity for young people in today's labor market, as well as tomorrow's. He received his BA in Political Science and Environmental Studies from UC Santa Barbara and his MPP from UC Berkeley.

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