THOUGHT LEADERS AT RAND

Three Rand Leaders on the Perils of Truth Decay

Francis Fukuyama, Michael D. Rich, and Soledad O’Brien

“Unretirement” and the Future of Work

Environmental Refugees
1. Not Everything Is Broken
This report on infrastructure funding and finance identifies policies that promote and deter investment in and maintenance of U.S. transportation and water infrastructure. According to the authors, the spending picture is not dire, but serious problems exist.
MORE AT www.rand.org/t/RR1739

2. Potential Economic Effects of Brexit
How might Brexit affect the economies of the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States? This calculator allows users to examine how the negotiations are likely to affect these three economies in the decade after Brexit negotiations conclude.
MORE AT www.rand.org/t/TL277

3. Lessons from Chile’s Obesity-Control Strategies
Chile has taken the lead in identifying and implementing obesity-control strategies that could prove to be the beginning of the end of a 30-year global epidemic. The country’s success can serve as a four-point lesson plan for other countries to follow.
MORE AT www.rand.org/b171230

4. TSA Administrator Discusses Global Aviation Security
David Pekoske, who became the seventh administrator of the Transportation Security Administration in August 2017, joined terrorism and security expert Brian Michael Jenkins for a discussion about evolving threats to transportation.
MORE AT www.rand.org/a171129

5. Recommendations for a Future National Defense Strategy
Senior defense analyst David Ochmanek presented testimony before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services in November 2017.
MORE AT www.rand.org/t/CT484
Unretired!

Older workers are staying on the job longer, according to a recent RAND survey.

The Q&A: The Perils of Truth Decay

Three RAND leaders on the diminishing role of facts and analysis in our national discourse.

Voices

As many as 300 million people are in danger of becoming “climate migrants” by midcentury.

Research Briefly

Social attitudes, hospice care, and hypersonic missiles.

Infographic

Helping families confront the unique stresses of military life.

Giving

Distinguished chairs support independent research and analysis that make a difference.

at RANDom

Margaret Mead at RAND: “culture cracking” the Soviets.
The United States, China, and Russia are racing to develop a new kind of missile that would pose a profound threat to the world, RAND researchers warned in a recent report. Those hypersonic missiles will be able to travel as fast as five miles a second. At that speed, they could cover the roughly 2,450 air miles between Los Angeles and New York in around eight minutes. They’ll also be able to maneuver until the final seconds of flight, making it almost impossible to predict and defend against an attack.

Countries fearing a hypersonic attack would have minutes at best to decide how to respond. That could force them into hair-trigger states of alert, ready to retaliate at the mere warning of an inbound missile. In a crisis, the stakes would be that much higher, the risk of war that much greater.

A handful of countries are working on hypersonic technology, the RAND researchers found, but most say their goal is a superfast commercial airplane, not a missile. The United States, China, and Russia are the closest to fielding an actual hypersonic missile.

The researchers called on those three countries to take steps now to prevent the proliferation of hypersonic weapons. They could, for example, agree not to sell hypersonic missiles or major subsystems; and to review sales of critical parts, such as engines or flight controls, case by case.

“The world would be safer if the proliferation of hypersonic missiles was strongly hindered,” the researchers wrote. The time for action is now, they added: Hypersonic missiles will almost certainly be a reality within a decade.

MORE AT
www.rand.org/t/RR2137
7-MINUTE VIDEO
www.rand.org/v170927
The Supreme Court’s 2015 ruling that gay and lesbian couples have the same fundamental right to marry as anyone else prompted a sharp change in American social views, a RAND researcher found.

That change, though, was not in how people themselves viewed same-sex marriage, but in how they thought society did. The ruling made even steadfast opponents of same-sex marriage perceive a shift in societal attitudes in favor of it.

Researchers led by Margaret Tankard, now an associate behavioral and social scientist at RAND, surveyed more than a thousand people in the days leading up to and following the Supreme Court’s decision. They asked whether those respondents supported or opposed gay marriage—but also whether they thought Americans in general did, and whether they thought support was building or falling.

The respondents didn’t budge in their personal opinions. But their perceptions of where the rest of America stood shifted by what amounted to a full point on a nine-point scale, on average, in favor. The change was apparent starting the day after the court’s decision.

Both liberals and conservatives perceived the same shift in social attitudes. That suggests the media played a limited role in shaping those perceptions, the researchers wrote, since liberals and conservatives no doubt got their news about the ruling from very different sources.

The study provides the first rigorous evidence that institutions like the Supreme Court, by their actions alone, can sway social perceptions, even on a flashpoint issue like marriage equality. That can change how people behave, as they recalibrate what they think is socially acceptable, the researchers noted—even when it doesn’t actually change anyone’s mind.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Hospice Care

Black and Hispanic hospice patients are more likely than white patients to spend their final days in hospice programs that provide substandard care and support, a recent RAND study found.

On a range of measures, from communication to help with symptoms, hospices serving more black and Hispanic patients provided lower-quality care than those with more white patients. That was, unfortunately, not much of a surprise. Previous studies have shown that minority patients are too often concentrated in medical practices and hospitals that provide lower levels of care.

The RAND study provides the first nationwide look at racial and ethnic disparities in hospice care. It drew on survey responses from nearly 300,000 caregivers whose family members or friends died while receiving hospice care.

It comes as more and more Americans turn to hospice for comfort and support at the end of their lives. Nearly 50 percent of Medicare enrollees who died in 2014 had received hospice care, more than double the rate in 2000.

The researchers found that hospice care experiences, as reported by caregivers, were poorer when the proportion of black or Hispanic patients was higher. That’s especially telling in light of another key finding: Within the same hospice, caregivers of black and Hispanic patients tended to be more positive in their reviews than caregivers of white patients.

The study identified one area of particular concern: emotional and religious support. Caregivers of black and Hispanic patients consistently ranked that as a problem—either inadequate support in a time of need or, in the case of Hispanic patients especially, too much support.

That underscores the need for hospice teams to better understand the social and religious traditions of their patients, especially as more black and Hispanic people enroll in hospice, the researchers wrote. More generally, the study revealed a critical need to connect those black and Hispanic patients with high-quality care at the end of their lives.
What I’m concerned with is the tenor of the conversation. People today feel that they don’t necessarily need to agree on a set of facts. It’s as if everybody has their own set of facts.

SOLEDAD O’BRIEN

The Q & A

Three RAND Leaders on The Perils of Truth Decay

“Truthiness” was still a punchline when Merriam-Webster named it the word of the year in 2006. Comedian Stephen Colbert had coined the term as an eye-roll at the march of bias and opinion over facts.

There’s less to laugh at now: the Oxford word of the year for 2016 was “post-truth.”

At RAND, that slipping grasp on the facts—“truth decay”—has become a research priority. A new RAND report—Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life by political scientist Jennifer Kavanagh and RAND’s president and CEO, Michael D. Rich—identifies the social, psychological, and historical foundations of the problem and sets out a research agenda to address it.

Earlier this year, Rich, journalist Soledad O’Brien, and political scientist Francis Fukuyama sat down with RAND Review staff writer Doug Irving to discuss the phenomenon of truth decay—and the search for solutions to it.
Q What do you think is the most serious challenge facing America or the world right now?

FF I’m most preoccupied with the threat to global democracy and to democratic institutions as a result of the rise of global populism. I think it’s likely that a lot of American institutions are going to be eroded. There are some scenarios in which the damage could be minimized, but there are also some in which it could be quite severe. Those institutions are not like physical obstacles; they’re only important to the extent that people in the political system think they’re important.

MR There’s also been an erosion in civic literacy, civil discourse, in engagement in our political system—how often people vote, how seriously they take their choices. I became interested in truth decay because I was worried about its implications for RAND. But I soon realized that it poses even greater dangers. Those trends have serious implications for democracy in the United States.

SO What I’m concerned with is the tenor of the conversation. People today feel that they don’t necessarily need to agree on a set of facts. It’s as if everybody has their own set of facts, and if you just shout loud enough your “facts” will push through. The debate is really just a screamfest. And we’re in this sort of outrage pipeline. Every day, we are spewing vast amounts of stuff and there’s no one who’s really trusted to go through it and give it context and pick out the stuff that’s true and throw out the stuff that’s false.
The Truth Decay book discusses confirmation bias, how people are hardwired to seek out facts that align with their beliefs. How do you overcome that, especially when they have this “firehose” of information coming from the internet?

MR I don’t think it’s ever going to be possible to eliminate cognitive biases, but there are ways to reduce their effects. We have to do a better job of teaching people to be more aware of their biases and to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. But that’s just one element. What’s needed is a revitalized effort to inspire the kind of civic engagement that’s appropriate for this century. If I were to have asked my father, “What should I do to be a good citizen?” one thing he would have said is, “Make sure you read a daily newspaper or watch one of the news broadcasts.” What’s the modern answer?

FF Civic education is fine and necessary, but it’s embedded in a much deeper problem, which is the degree of polarization. We’re seeing people who are part of the political elite doing things that really violate some basic norms and constitutional principles. But they’re willing to do it because it’s to their political advantage.

SO I would argue it even goes farther than that. What you’re describing is just lying, just basic lies. There was a time when being branded as a liar would actually end their careers. But with this constant flow of outrage, people are a little bit inured to this.

You’re very deliberate in calling out lies as you see them on social media. There’s been a debate within journalism about when to use that word. When do you think journalists should say something is a lie?

SO Well … when it’s a lie. Some things are provable facts—a point made well in the Truth Decay book—and some things are just lies, and when it’s a lie you should call it a lie. I truly believe people don’t because they’re trying to make sure their tone is acceptable and they’re not alienating someone they need access to. So, yes, I call people liars all the time because I’m not trying to get access to people very often. I’m self-employed, so I don’t have employers who are worried about how I’m going to come across.

You’re working on a book about identity, Frank. How does this erosion of truth play into that?

FF There’s a very direct connection. Identity politics is the belief that you are a member of a group that has been marginalized and victimized, not receiving adequate recognition. What you end up having is a world that is divided into these self-regarding groups, all of which claim victim status, and that’s what propels a lot of the bitterness in the conversation.

SO This identity issue is really interesting because it does give credence to the individual’s narrative over what the data might tell you. For example: “I am a white person who feels like I was passed over for a job; ergo, racism against white people is a big issue.” The data wouldn’t bear that out, but it’s someone’s lived experience so that’s how they see the world. It really does not allow you to have a nuanced conversation, because everybody’s got their own individual story.

Truth Decay talks about how the military, businesses, even baseball teams have gone more toward data, more toward facts. What is it about politics that has seemingly gone so far in the other direction?

MR One reason is, as Frank mentioned, the increase in political polarization, reinforced by social and economic polarization. More and more, politicians can be elected by appealing to narrower and often extreme slices of the electorate on both sides of the spectrum. And frankly, not enough of the people who are eligible to vote hold our officials accountable.

SO Any good political campaign has a ton of data on exactly who their voter is. What street they need to be on in order to get those people. What are those key words or dog whistles that will infuriate the audience. So I think there’s tons of data in politics. It’s just not data in the way that we’d think about it.

MR The distinction is that data are used in the political dimension of a politician’s job, but seemingly less and less in the policymaking dimension.

SO And that goes with the news cycle really saying, “Don’t give me all that wonky information … make it sing!” The data point doesn’t really matter if you can sell
it well and wrap it in a pretty package and deliver it in less than 10 seconds as a sound bite.

FF A lot of my students don’t even own televisions anymore. They don’t read newspapers, they get all of their information from Facebook or Twitter or other social media sources. The position of these sources is pretty much, “We have no responsibility to curate what’s on our platforms and, in fact, if we do we’ll be held liable for that content.” That means they are completely exempted from any responsibility for propagating hate speech, conspiracy theories, fake news, all of that stuff. That’s something that can change. It can change through regulation, or it can be a matter of self-regulation. The answer doesn’t have to be government policy, necessarily. It could be policies undertaken by the platforms themselves, and that will happen, I think.

MR I’m not optimistic that this decay that we talk about is reversible if we don’t take any steps in response. It is not going to be self-correcting. But I am optimistic that we can develop, as a society, a strategy that will be successful. We’ve seen several earlier periods that were similar in many respects to what we’re experiencing now. Not identical, but similar, and the country came out of them. We don’t know everything we need to combat truth decay, but I think we’ve made a good start in outlining a research agenda that will tell us what else we need to know. We’re committed to pursuing it. We’re not going to be able to do it all by ourselves, but we’re going to do what we can.

Defining truth decay

RAND’s research suggests that four main trends compose truth decay. Alone, each is worrisome. Together, they interact with and amplify each other, creating a complex problem that is difficult to understand and to counteract.

1. Heightened disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of data

There have always been differences of opinion within the American electorate. But disagreements about objective facts and topics for which data are reasonably definitive have become increasingly common. Examples include the benefits of vaccines and the safety of genetically modified foods.

2. The blurred line between opinion and fact

Changes in media content and the media business model have contributed to the jumbling of fact, fiction, and opinion. Examples include journalistic content that fails to distinguish between opinion and fact, news programs that rely on commentary rather than factual reporting without clearly labeling them, and social media platforms that allow anyone to become a source of information.

3. Increased volume and influence of opinion and personal experience across the communications landscape

The growth in the volume of subjective content relative to factual information increases the likelihood that audiences will encounter speculation or downright falsehoods. That makes it more difficult to identify key pieces of factual information.

4. Diminished trust in formerly respected institutions as sources of factual information

Polling data from across the country show a significant drop, and continuing decline, in public trust in such institutions as the government and the media. Amid confusion about what is fact and what is falsehood, where people should turn for objective, factual information also becomes unclear.
You’re on the front lines of all this, Soledad. How optimistic are you?

SO It depends on the day you ask me. In terms of self-policing, I just don’t see that happening because I think news organizations are in a bit of a panic trying to figure out the next financial model that’s going to be successful. I do think people have never seen so many stories on emoluments and these details in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. I mean, we’re talking about things that I just have never covered as a journalist because people didn’t feel the need to do a deep dive into who we are as Americans and what the Constitution says.

Michael talked about what his father might have said if he asked what it takes to be a good citizen. I’ll turn that around and ask you three: In this current age, what does it take to be a good citizen?

FF It requires a certain kind of education that gives you a little bit of historical context, so you know what the basic institutions of our country are, where they came from, and how they operate. Even that kind of minimal knowledge has really disappeared from public education in this country.

MR I would add an increased emphasis on basic critical thinking skills. And, in the era of big data, the fact that we don’t routinely teach elementary statistical concepts to future voters is worrisome.

SO Yes! One of the most ridiculous pitches of the tax bill was what the average American will save. You know, the average of me and Bill Gates is a really fantastic number that I will never see. It was stunning to see that being pitched to reporters who never challenged it. But to answer your question: Number one, people have to vote. People have gotten to the point of thinking their vote is utterly irrelevant and all politicians are essentially interchangeable.

When you look to the future, what gives you hope?

SO The fact that people have embraced this massive information pipeline into their home and want to communicate and reach out. There’s been a lot of terrible communication and pulling together of like-minded people who have awful intentions. But really, it also has a great opportunity to pull together people who want to make change that is positive. I think that’s very powerful.

MR The United States has recovered from even deeper divisions before, and no other country has perfected a better form of government. Those are the reasons that give me optimism, but it’s going to require a lot of thought and hard work.

FF The system has received some really big shocks in the last couple of years, and it takes awhile to recover from shocks. But the very speed of what has happened has also stimulated a lot of thinking and reflection, and I think that’s ultimately what’s going to save us.

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### Is this new, or déjà vu?

**1880s–1890s**

The Gilded Age, known for “yellow journalism” that trafficked in exaggeration, scandal-mongering, and sensationalism

**1920s–1930s**

The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, featuring the advent of radio and “jazz journalism,” in which tabloids published sensationalized stories of sex and violence

**1960s–1970s**

The Vietnam War, with “New Journalism” that conveyed writers’ subjective impressions, and widespread adoption of television news as a primary information source

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**In all three of these periods**, new forms and styles of communication, coupled with social, political, and economic unrest, contributed to the emergence of at least two of truth decay’s key trends: the blurred line between fact and opinion and the increased relative volume of opinion over fact. RAND researchers also found some evidence of declining trust in institutions as sources of factual information in two of these historical periods.

But the current era of truth decay stands alone in at least one key way. Researchers found no evidence of fundamental disagreements over objective facts in any of the three historical periods. The present period stands alone in possessing all four trends. New technologies, social media, 24-hour news coverage, and political polarization accentuate the effects of the four trends in the present period, as well.

The good news: Past periods similar to truth decay all drew to a close. RAND researchers found that each of the previous periods ended when institutions, such as the government, increased transparency and Americans attached more value to objective facts within political and civil discourse. Further investigation of these eras may lead to lessons on how to rein in some aspects of the current version of truth decay.
Truth decay as a system

DRIVERS
- Cognitive processing and cognitive biases
- Changes in the information system
- Competing demands on the educational system
- Polarization

AGENTS OF TRUTH DECAY

TRUTH DECAY’S FOUR TRENDS
- Increasing disagreement about facts and data
- A blurring of the line between opinion and fact
- The increasing relative volume and resulting influence of opinion over fact
- Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information

CONSEQUENCES
- Erosion of civil discourse
- Political paralysis
- Alienation and disengagement
- Uncertainty

RAND Ventures
The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

RAND Ventures is a vehicle for investing in policy solutions. Philanthropic contributions support our ability to take the long view, tackle tough and often-controversial topics, and share our findings in innovative and compelling ways.

Funding for this venture was provided by gifts from RAND supporters and income from operations. RAND’s research findings and recommendations are based on data and evidence and therefore do not necessarily reflect the policy preferences or interests of its clients, donors, or supporters.
When Work Never Ends
The Trend Toward Unretirement

Ahhhhh, retirement. For many, the word conjures up images of leisurely lunches and finally picking up those books you’ve been meaning to read. But a majority of retirees say they would return to work—and many already have, according to RAND’s American Working Conditions Survey. Welcome to the trend of “unretirement.”
More than half of retirees 50 and older said they would work in the future for the right opportunity, the survey found—and the percentage is even higher among the college educated. Meanwhile, 39 percent of workers 65 and older who are currently employed had previously retired at some point.

“What we found is consistent with retirement being a fluid concept,” according to Kathleen Mullen, a senior economist at RAND and coauthor of a recent report on the subject. “Significant numbers of older people move in and out of the workforce. Retirement isn’t necessarily permanent.”

In fact, older people are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. workforce. One in five workers today is 55 or older; by 2024, that number will be one in four, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Much of this shift is due to the behavior of the nation’s two largest populations: Baby boomers are delaying retirement, and millennials are entering the workforce later.
The economy says “thank you”

Many experts say that older workers staying on the job longer is helping to offset the decline in the labor force participation rate. The rate is expected to drop from 62.9 percent in 2014 to 60.9 percent in 2024—the lowest level since the early 1970s—which the BLS predicts will likely keep a lid on economic growth.

This trend in labor participation isn’t going to turn around any time soon.

- Millennials (now roughly ages 20–36) are expected to have fewer children, so population growth is expected to be slower than in past decades. As a result, that generation won’t have as big an influence on the workforce as the baby boomers did.
- Generation X (now roughly ages 37–52) was hit hardest by the recession, according to the Census Bureau, so they’ll work longer, too.
- If it weren’t for a projected 17.6 million new immigrants, the total U.S. working-age population in 2035 would actually be 4 percent smaller than it was in 2015.

It’s not all about income

You might expect finances to be the reason older people are working longer. And it is for many people. As Americans live longer, healthier, and more active lives, they also need income to last through their old age.

Increasingly, they are making their own way as retirement benefits have grown stingier. The age at which people can collect their full Social Security benefit is higher than it used to be. And just 5 percent of large employers still offer a pension plan that pays a stable monthly income, according to consulting firm Willis Towers Watson, as 401(k)-style plans that ebb and flow with the stock market have become the norm.

However, the American Working Conditions Survey (AWCS) found that older job seekers are less likely than their younger counterparts to rate formal benefits—such as dental insurance, life insurance, or paid time off—as essential or very important.

Often, it’s about fulfillment

Meaningful work is considered a key reason that older workers delay retirement, and RAND’s survey suggests older workers have it. Compared with their midcareer peers, older Americans report having more autonomy at work and more flexibility in their work schedules, according to the AWCS, and two-thirds of older workers said they were doing useful work and felt satisfaction over work well done.

As just one example, 82-year-old Nat Trives delayed retirement for fulfillment rather than finances. After 40 years in public service—he’s a former Santa Monica police officer, former instructor at California State University, Los An-
geles, and a former administrator at Santa Monica College—Trives could have retired at least a decade before he finally began drawing a pension.

He finally “retired” in 1997, if you can call it that. Since then, Trives has been active in more than 20 community organizations and teaches a class on current events and world affairs at Emeritus College, a program of Santa Monica College for the older adult community. His class of about 100 includes retired professionals such as a federal judge, a podiatrist, and legislative staffers.

When asked if he will ever truly stop working, Trives responded with a laugh, “I hate to say it, but you sound like my wife. In spite of some health issues, I’d like to work as long as I’m viewed to be an asset. Any time I become a burden or a liability to somebody, then it’s time to hang it up. Right now I’m having fun. I’m a mentor for millennial types as well as older professionals.”

What type of work are older workers doing?

According to RAND’s survey, older workers’ jobs are surprisingly physical. Older workers are less likely than younger workers to sit all day on the job (39 percent versus 49 percent), and they report almost as much exposure to intense or repetitive physical exertion as younger workers (58 percent versus 63 percent of younger workers).

Older workers are more likely to be in management, legal, and community or social service work than their younger peers, according to the Pew Research Center. They are more than twice as likely to be self-employed as mid-career workers (16 percent versus 7 percent), according to a 2013 study in The Gerontologist. This jibes with a National Bureau of Economic Research report that suggests older workers are more likely to participate in “alternative work arrangements” like consulting, freelancing, and on-call work than their younger counterparts (24 percent versus 14 percent).
Hectic, Hazardous, and Physical: How Americans View the Workplace

While older workers may be reluctant to retire, how do Americans overall view the workplace?

The American Working Conditions Survey examined a large number of workplace issues for all workers age 25–71. Here are some of the highlights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working conditions can be harsh.</th>
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<td>More than 60 percent of Americans perform physically demanding work, like moving heavy loads. More than half are exposed to hazards such as loud environments, extreme temperatures, hazardous materials, or unhealthy air.</td>
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<th>The environment can be hostile.</th>
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<td>One in 5 workers has been recently subjected to verbal abuse, humiliation, unwanted sexual attention, and bullying or harassment—often from their customers—according to the survey.</td>
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<th>Their jobs are so hectic that Americans often work in their free time.</th>
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<td>Half say they work in their free time, and 1 in 10 do so nearly every day. One in 4 workers say they don’t have enough time to do their job, and 2 in 3 work at high speed or on tight deadlines.</td>
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<th>Workers have some autonomy on the job but little control over their schedules.</th>
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<td>Although work is hectic, 3 in 4 workers say they have enough autonomy to prioritize some tasks over others. This does not apply to their work calendars: More than 1 in 3 have no control over their schedule.</td>
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<th>Still, work can be a source of support and satisfaction.</th>
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<td>Nearly 3 in 5 workers say they have a supportive boss, and more than half have good friends at work. More than 60 percent feel they are doing useful work, including satisfaction for a job well done or a sense of accomplishment. But just 2 in 5 see good prospects for advancement.</td>
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| How do American working conditions compare to those in Europe? We’re about to find out. The American Working Conditions Survey syncs with a European study conducted at the same time, and researchers are analyzing the two surveys now. |

The survey backs up prior research

The AWCS confirms the findings of other RAND research. One study of “the puzzling aspect of retirement behavior known as ‘unretirement’” found that 82 percent of retirees who returned to work anticipated doing so all along and weren’t forced to do so by financial shocks, poor planning, or lack of savings. For the small minority who unexpectedly returned to work, the evidence suggests they did so because retirement was less satisfying than expected. That same study found that about half of retirees followed nontraditional paths of retirement in that they did not exit the labor force permanently.

Another RAND study determined that Americans are better prepared for retirement than most people think, with about 71 percent of Americans ages 66–69 having adequate resources to retire. Researchers reached this conclusion by looking at how much people consume in their retirement, rather than how much of their working income they will replace through Social Security and other resources. They found that, even as people live longer, healthier lives, they eventually slow down and need less income to support this less-active lifestyle.

The new normal?

Trives believes longer careers are the new normal, based on his own experiences and those he has encountered through Emeritus College.

“People are working longer, and I think they’re evolving,” he says. “More people are using technology. More people are diversifying their news sources. More people are interested in getting out of their rocking chair, so to speak.”

Working Conditions in the United States: Results of the 2015 American Working Conditions Survey
IS AVAILABLE FOR FREE DOWNLOAD AT www.rand.org/t/RR2014
Helping Military Families

A look at non-medical counseling programs in the U.S. military

In addition to the normal challenges experienced by most families, military families confront unique stresses relating to frequent moves and lengthy deployments, increased responsibilities for the non-deployed spouse, and strains on relationships due to extended absences. Since 2004, the U.S. Department of Defense has offered non-medical counseling through two programs: Military and Family Life Counseling (MFLC) and Military OneSource. A recent evaluation of these programs suggests that military personnel and their families find them to be helpful and beneficial.

Participants gave the programs favorable ratings

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<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
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<td>76%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<td>are likely to use the program again</td>
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<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
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<td>71%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<td>were satisfied with continuity of care</td>
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Counselors received high marks

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<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
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<td>78%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<td>reported that counselors were knowledgeable</td>
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<td>84%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reported that counselors listened to them carefully</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Family/relationship issues and stress/anxiety were the most frequently reported reasons for seeking counseling

- Family/relationship: 68%
- Stress/anxiety: 24%
- 55%

Most program participants reported positive experiences over a three-month period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experienced a reduction in problem severity</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experienced a reduction in interference with daily routines</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MFLC</th>
<th>Military OneSource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experienced a reduction in feeling stressed or anxious</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


GETTY IMAGES: ROBIN OLIMB, MACROVECTOR, SAMUEL LEVICH, OSTAPENKO OLENA
In December 2017, wildfires tearing across Southern California forced thousands of residents to evacuate their homes. Even more people fled ahead of the hurricanes that slammed into Texas and Florida earlier that year, jamming highways and filling hotels. A viral social media post showed a flight-radar picture of people trying to escape Florida and posed a provocative question: What if the adjoining states were countries and didn’t grant escaping migrants refuge?

By the middle of this century, experts estimate that climate change is likely to displace between 150 million and 300 million people. If this group formed a country, it would be the fourth-largest in the world, with a population nearly as large as that of the United States.

Yet neither individual countries nor the global community are completely prepared to support a whole new class of “climate migrants.” As a physician and public health researcher in India, I learned the value of surveillance and early warning systems for managing infectious disease outbreaks. Based on my current research on health impacts of heat waves in developing countries, I believe much needs to be done at the national, regional, and global level to deal with climate migrants.
Climate change will affect most everyone on the planet to some degree, but poor people in developing nations will be affected most severely.

Azhar is a physician, an assistant policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, and a Ph.D. candidate in policy analysis at the Pardee RAND Graduate School.
Millions displaced yearly

Climate migration is already happening. Every year desertification in Mexico’s drylands forces 700,000 people to relocate. Cyclones have displaced thousands from Tuvalu in the South Pacific and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean. Experts agree that a prolonged drought may have catalyzed Syria’s civil war and resulting migration.

Between 2008 and 2015, an average of 26.4 million people per year were displaced by climate- or weather-related disasters, according to the United Nations. And the science of climate change indicates that these trends are likely to get worse. With each 1-degree increase in temperature, the air’s moisture-carrying capacity increases by 7 percent, fueling increasingly severe storms. Sea levels may rise by as much as 3 feet by the year 2100, submerging coastal areas and inhabited islands.

The Pacific Islands are extremely vulnerable, as are more than 410 U.S. cities and others around the globe, including Amsterdam, Hamburg, Lisbon, and Mumbai. Rising temperatures could make parts of west Asia inhospitable to human life. On the same day that Hurricane Irma roared over Florida in September, heavy rains on the other side of the world submerged one-third of Bangladesh and eastern parts of India, killing thousands.

Climate change will affect most everyone on the planet to some degree, but poor people in developing nations will be affected most severely. Extreme weather events and tropical diseases wreak the heaviest damage in these regions. Undernourished people who have few resources and inadequate housing are especially at risk and likely to be displaced.

Recognize and plan for climate migrants now

Today the global community has not universally acknowledged the existence of climate migrants, much less agreed on how to define them. According to international refugee law, climate migrants are not legally considered refugees. Therefore, they have none of the protections officially accorded to refugees, who are technically defined as people fleeing persecution. No global agreements exist to help millions of people who are displaced by natural disasters every year.

Refugees’ rights, and nations’ legal obligation to defend them, were first defined under the 1951 Refugee Convention, which was expanded in 1967. This work took place well before it was apparent that climate change would become a major force driving migrations and creating refugee crises.

Under the convention, a refugee is defined as someone “unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership
of a particular social group, or political opinion." The convention legally binds nations to provide access to courts, identity papers, and travel documents, and to offer possible naturalization. It also bars discriminating against refugees, penalizing them, expelling them or forcibly returning them to their countries of origin. Refugees are entitled to practice their religions, attain education, and access public assistance.

In my view, governments and organizations such as the United Nations should consider modifying international law to provide legal status to environmental refugees and establish protections and rights for them. Reforms could factor in the concept of “climate justice,” the notion that climate change is an ethical and social concern. After all, richer countries have contributed the most to cause warming, while poor countries will bear the most disastrous consequences.

Some observers have suggested that countries that bear major responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions should take in more refugees. Alternatively, the world’s largest carbon polluters could contribute to a fund that would pay for refugee care and resettlement for those temporarily and permanently displaced.

The Paris climate agreement does not mention climate refugees. However, there have been some consultations and initiatives by various organizations and governments. They include efforts to create a climate change displacement coordination facility and a U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change.

It is tough to define a climate refugee or migrant. This could be one of the biggest challenges in developing policies.

As history has shown, destination countries respond to waves of migration in various ways, ranging from welcoming immigrants to placing them in detention camps or denying them assistance. Some countries may be selective in whom they allow in, favoring only the young and productive while leaving children, the elderly, and the infirm behind. A guiding global policy could help prevent confusion and outline some minimum standards.

**Short-term actions**

Negotiating international agreements on these issues could take many years. For now, major G20 powers such as the United States, the European Union, China, Russia, India, Canada, Australia, and Brazil should consider intermediate steps. The United States could offer temporary protected status to climate migrants who are already on its soil. Government aid programs and nongovernment organizations should ramp up support to refugee relief organizations and ensure that aid reaches refugees from climate disasters.

In addition, all countries that have not signed the United Nations refugee conventions could consider joining them. This includes many developing countries in South Asia and the Middle East that are highly vulnerable to climate change and that already have large refugee populations. Since most of the affected people in these countries will likely move to neighboring nations, it is crucial that all countries in these regions abide by a common set of policies for handling and assisting refugees.

The scale of this challenge is unlike anything humanity has ever faced. By mid-century, climate change is likely to uproot far more people than World War II, which displaced some 60 million across Europe, or the Partition of India, which affected approximately 15 million. The migration crisis that has gripped Europe since 2015 has involved something over 1 million refugees and migrants. It is daunting to envision much larger flows of people, but that is why the global community should start doing so now.

A version of this commentary originally appeared on The Conversation in December 2017.
Giving

In more than 50 years at RAND, Natalie Crawford has built a reputation as a tough, no-nonsense analyst of Air Force programs, as well as a mentor for young officers moving up the ranks.

She can get the Air Force chief of staff on the phone, but she also keeps in touch for years with former students or junior staff officers.

She “gave her entire life essentially to our Air Force,” said General Norton “Norty” Schwartz, a former Air Force chief of staff. “She was so dedicated and adopted so many of us along the way and invested her intellect in us. She is the quintessential mentor from outside the Air Force.”

Crawford came to RAND as a computer programmer in 1964. At the time, she says, she didn’t know much about the Air Force except that it had airplanes. Nonetheless, she joined the Aeronautics and Astronautics Department and was soon helping to analyze weapon systems.

She never missed an opportunity to climb into a cockpit, to see those weapon systems up close and in action. Afterward, she would sit and talk with crewmembers about how those systems worked under real combat conditions. That attention to detail made her a national expert in Air Force weapons, aircraft performance, force modernization, and space systems.

Four-star General Philip Breedlove, a former Air Force vice chief of staff, described her as a “guided missile” in finding and solving problems.

“It’s the work that matters, not the applause,” Crawford would tell people. Or: “I get paid to tell the truth, not to sell the story.” Or her personal mantra throughout her career: “Every day is a school day.”

Crawford has received several high honors, including the Medal for Exceptional Public Service from the Office of the Secretary of Defense; the Air Force Association’s Lifetime Achievement Award; and the Air Force Academy’s National Defense Award for significant contributions to national security.

Crawford is also herself a longtime donor to RAND, as well as president of the RAND Alumni Association, a membership organization of former and current RAND associates. In 2014, with RAND president and CEO Michael Rich, she established the Alumni Impact Fund, which is designed to help extend the impact of RAND research and analysis. During the past four annual campaigns, with Natalie’s generosity and leadership, the association has raised more than $436,000.
Margaret Mead is well-known for her studies about sexual attitudes in the South Pacific. So RAND might have seemed like an odd fit for this cultural anthropologist.

But during World War II, Mead successfully lobbied the government to include anthropologists in the war effort to help understand enemies and allies. She began using anthropological techniques to characterize entire civilizations from afar. After the war, she and her husband had already written “national character” studies of Americans and Britons. At RAND from 1948 to 1950, she turned to the USSR.

To accomplish what she called “culture cracking,” Mead looked to Russian emigres, books, journals, archives, and films for answers since the Soviet Union was inaccessible. The result, *Soviet Attitudes Toward Authority: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Problems of Soviet Character*, examines the discrepancy between Bolshevik ideals and Soviet reality. It ends with Mead predicting the USSR’s future strengths as well as weaknesses that the United States might exploit.

The study met with mixed reviews. “The study is blood chilling and strips bare our chiefest enemy,” the *Omaha World-Herald* breathlessly reported. Another reviewer wrote: “Europeans have their views about the American habit of putting one’s legs on tables, about American admiration for Coca-Cola and chewing gum... But nobody would consider these features part of a serious study of the ‘traditional American character’.”

Mead soon moved on from conducting national character studies to becoming a national character herself, advocating for women’s rights, more sexual freedom, better race relations, and solutions to pollution and world hunger.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world,” Mead is famously quoted as saying. “Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

*Sources: *Mead and the Trajectory of Anthropology in the United States* by Ian Jarvie; *The New York Times; The Russian Review; Encyclopedia Britannica;* and RAND archives.
An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life

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