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Women in the Air Force

What are key factors that women in the U.S. Air Force consider when deciding whether to separate from the active-duty Air Force, and how could policies and programs be improved to address potential barriers and improve retention of women?

READ THE REPORT AT www.rand.org/t/RR2073

Senior Airman Felicia Anderson, 74th Aircraft Maintenance Unit crew chief, cleans cockpit glass on an A-10C Thunderbolt II during an air-land integration combat training exercise, which hosted 12 A-10s from Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.
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Michael Cyrilik spent years living on the streets, until a bike accident landed him in the hospital and brought him to the attention of Housing for Health. The Los Angeles program has moved thousands of people into permanent housing and helped them address their health needs, dramatically reducing their use of emergency rooms and other expensive health services.

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Balloons for North Korea

Thousands of balloons sail into North Korea every year, carrying political messages from activist groups in South Korea as well as small mementos of the outside world: socks, radios, even Choco Pies.

But a recent RAND study concluded the balloons could greatly expand their reach with a few simple and inexpensive improvements.

The balloons already appear to have an impact. The North Korean government considers them troublesome enough that it caused a brief international incident in October 2014 when it fired anti-aircraft rounds at one but instead hit South Korean territory. Nonetheless, most of the balloons probably hit the ground not far from the border. RAND’s study modeled weather patterns and found the balloons would penetrate much farther into North Korea if the groups sending them tracked high-altitude wind forecasts and only launched on the most favorable days.

Some groups have started to experiment with drones to ferry their packages into North Korea, but those have limited range. RAND’s study identified a less-expensive alternative that could use hobby-shop parts. The groups could attach a guided glider to a balloon, which would release at high altitude and could cover 20 or more miles on its way to the ground.

The balloons themselves—some of them 30 feet long—likely burst when they get too high and become over-pressurized, the report noted. Adding a $20 relief valve would buy them hours more flight time and allow them to fly at higher altitudes. And that would likely put them out of range if North Korea decided to try again to shoot one down.

MORE AT www.rand.org/t/RR1379

Helping the Formerly Incarcerated

Even after they serve their time, people with a serious crime on their record face a life sentence of suspicion and stigma in the labor market. High school dropouts have better odds of finding a job than they do.

That has real social and economic costs, not least because it creates a class of people who cannot escape un- or underemployment. An array of tax credits and other public programs have sought to help more of those who are reintegrating get a foot in the door, but with only limited success.

RAND researchers conducted experiments with more than 100 companies to test whether other incentives might do more to help these individuals get hired. RAND asked hiring managers to imagine qualified candidates with a single nonviolent felony on their records. Which incentives would get them a second look?

Not surprisingly, the hiring managers preferred candidates backed by larger tax credits. But they also favored candidates sent by staffing agencies that promised to replace them if they didn’t work out. The managers were also more likely to call back candidates who had a reliable ride to work, and whose incentives didn’t require much paperwork.

But what the hiring managers really wanted was a work history—not a quick verification of employment dates, but a detailed account of responsibilities and performance. Up to 80 percent of the managers said that would encourage them to consider the formerly incarcerated, making it more valuable than a bigger tax credit.

The findings could help improve job-placement efforts at staffing agencies and employment programs, the researchers wrote—and help potentially hundreds of thousands of people get back to work.

MORE AT www.rand.org/t/RR2142
Up in the Air

Could we do more than just hold the line on climate change?

A recent RAND study explored a much more revolutionary goal, a climate-change moonshot. What if we could scrub 300 years of additional carbon from our air, restoring the atmosphere to conditions nobody has seen since before the Industrial Revolution?

The technology exists, at least in early form, to capture carbon and store it deep underground or convert it into pellets. It’s possible that we could scale that up to a global effort to clean the air. The question is whether that’s a reasonable goal.

To test the idea, researchers ran computer simulations of more than 600 possible futures. They found that climate restoration could work—and could help us meet other climate-change goals—if carbon-capture technology develops as its promoters hope it will. In those best-case scenarios, climate restoration could be achieved for less than the current cost of global military spending, about 2 percent of the world economy.

The study, funded by a generous gift to the RAND Frederick S. Pardee Center for Longer Range Global Policy and the Future Human Condition, concluded that the best option might be to keep existing goals to at least stabilize the climate, while also exploring climate restoration. After all, addressing climate change will require plenty of experimentation in the years to come, on the policy side as well as the technology side.

If everything falls into place, the computer models showed that climate restoration could make a real difference within two generations, by around 2075. That would be nearly 300 years after the invention of the steam engine started the Industrial Revolution.

What Teachers Are Saying About Teaching

American teachers often work without a clear understanding of state education standards, under administrators who themselves are not always clear on the requirements. Most say they’re too busy running from bell to bell to work with their fellow teachers to improve lesson plans or classroom activities.

The findings, from RAND’s American Teacher Panel and American School Leader Panel, point to a need for more support and better guidance in American schools. They also provide a glimpse of the workday realities that teachers face, at a time when thousands have gone on strike for better pay, classroom support, and school funding.

RAND developed the two panels with support from teacher and school principal associations, as well as private foundations, to give public-school teachers a voice on education policy and practice.

A strong majority of the teachers, for example, oppose existing standardized tests, which many think are too difficult and take time away from more important classroom work. But they reported almost universal support for the use of statewide standards to guide classroom instruction. Nonetheless, one survey of hundreds of language arts teachers on the panel found that most were using reading books that did not reflect current state standards. A majority of teachers and school administrators had trouble identifying which approaches were highlighted by their state standards, and which were not.

The continuing surveys are meant to give policymakers an on-the-ground look at what works and what doesn’t in American education. But the answers aren’t as easy as setting aside more time for training. Nearly two-thirds of the teachers on RAND’s panel said they’re already too busy to even collaborate with their colleagues.

Major funders of the American Teacher Panel and the American School Leader Panel include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Helmsley Charitable Trust, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation.
Pursuit of the Extraordinary

Dr. Mae Jemison made history 25 years ago as a crew member aboard the shuttle *Endeavour*, becoming the first woman of color to travel in space. Today, she leads the 100 Year Starship, an initiative designed to help enable interstellar travel in the 2100s. Jemison recently spoke at RAND as RAND’s 2018 Haskins Fellow, sharing insights from her experience as a physician, inventor, environmental studies professor, science literacy advocate, development worker in Africa, and founder of two tech start-ups.

**On the first astronomers**
*The Preliminary Design of an Experimental World-Circling Spaceship* came out of RAND in May 1946. Was it the beginning of space exploration? I would have to say no. The reason why? Space exploration really began thousands of generations ago, when one of my ancestors looked up at the stars and said, “You know, that spot of light right there? Ten years ago, it was right over there.” Can you imagine the observational capacity that was required to do that? That’s what we’re building on now.

**On the next frontier**
In space exploration, what would the pursuit of the extraordinary be? Mars, right? The question I ask is, Is Mars audacious enough? Since the majority of the people on this planet have been born, we’ve had something on Mars. Mars isn’t the kind of challenge that we don’t know how to do.

The question becomes, Why don’t we try something we don’t know how to do? When we had the challenge of going to the moon, we didn’t know very much about going to the moon and what was there. It really forced us to do things differently.

So let’s do something really difficult: Let’s try interstellar. Going beyond our solar system to another star. The project 100 Year Starship was seed-funded by DARPA to make sure we have the capabilities for human travel beyond our solar system, beyond our star in 100 years. Not a launch date, but the capabilities. And that’s where the important part comes in.

How do we create the capabilities? Why is this difficult? The extreme nature of the hurdles of interstellar make us reevaluate what we think we know. We can’t do it using today’s technology. It demands that we make radical leaps.

**On the influence of space exploration**
Space has been part of everything we’ve done for generations. We learned how to plant based on lunar cycles, observing the moon, when certain stars rise in the sky. That’s how we knew about seasons—we navigated from the stars. It’s been part of us.

In health, magnetic resonance imaging machines use the same algorithms that are used to help turn digital signals from a planet like Venus into images. Those algorithms are
used to turn digital signals from your body being put in a magnetic field into images that a physician can read. Space exploration has fundamentally changed our world.

**On interstellar travel as a metaphor**

When we look forward, we have to deal with things that are in the dark: time and distance and all these things that are different. Some of the ways we can look at requirements for success in going into the dark are these things we have to do. We have to be open. We have to use existing knowledge and capabilities in new ways. We have to be flexible. We have to be self-sufficient. We have to have reality tested. We have to have an internal compass that is not determined by competition with someone else. We have to do all of those things based on radically unexpected partnerships. Those are the pieces that we are looking for when we talk about how we get better policies. How do we get the world that we want to live in? The challenge of human interstellar flight really mirrors the challenges that we face in the world today.
A FOCUS ON THE RESEARCH OF
a team led by Andrew R. Morral, Rajeev Ramchand,
Rosanna Smart, Carole Roan Gresenz, and Terry L. Schell

Understanding the Effects of Gun Policies

How Research and Analysis Can Fill in Deadly Knowledge Gaps and Fix a Uniquely American Problem

By Doug Irving, Staff Writer

RAND's report generally uses the most common words and definitions for all terms. For example, it uses “assault weapon” rather than “modern sporting rifle.” It uses “gun” and “firearm” interchangeably, even though in some contexts—especially in the military—“firearm” is used to describe light, personal weapons and “gun” is reserved for heavier weapons.
Do gun-free zones prevent mass shootings, or encourage them? The truth is, no one has enough good evidence to say for sure.

America spends more research money studying hernias and peptic ulcers than it does studying gun violence. As a result, we don’t know whether assault-weapon bans reduce homicides, or whether better background checks might prevent accidental shootings. We don’t even know how many guns are circulating in the United States right now.

A two-year study of gun policy in America by researchers at RAND found the following:

- The evidence for or against most major gun policy proposals is weak, inconclusive, contradictory, or entirely nonexistent. We don’t even have a shared set of facts on basic questions. How many mass shootings were there in 2015? Depending on the definition, estimates range from 7 to 371.

- The strongest evidence supports safe storage laws meant to keep firearms out of the hands of children. But even there, the lack of research makes it hard to anticipate any trade-offs, such as hindering defensive gun use.

- For all the fury of the debate, the pro- and anti-gun control sides appear to share many of the same objectives when it comes to gun policy. They differ over which policies will best achieve those objectives. That’s a question of fact that better research could answer.
How We Got Here

“Gun policy is an area that has been systematically and intentionally under-studied for the last two decades,” said Andrew Morral, a senior behavioral scientist at RAND who led a team of nearly 20 researchers on the gun policy project.

“Getting better information seems like an obvious first step toward trying to create a shared set of understandings about which policies will achieve goals that both sides in the debate appear to share,” he added. “No guarantees. But my hunch is that there are enough people who want to know the truth that collecting that kind of information would help grow a consensus around a shared set of facts.”

Among the leading causes of death in America, gunshots claim about as many lives as car crashes. More than 38,000 people die by guns every year, the majority of them suicides—an average of more than 100 gun deaths every day. Yet the federal government spends only about 1.6 percent as much on gun violence research as it does on research into traffic crashes and other leading causes of death. That’s no accident.

In the mid-1990s, Congress zeroed out the budget for gun violence prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) after some of its studies linked home gun ownership with higher rates of firearm deaths. Congress also prohibited the use of federal research funding to promote gun control. The CDC has since interpreted that rule, advocated by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and known as the Dickey Amendment, as an outright ban on most gun research.

That has left mostly private foundations and universities to search for evidence about what works and what doesn’t to prevent gun violence. Without government support, they also work without much government data. Researchers wanting to follow trends in gun ownership rates, for example, have had to try to estimate those numbers from hunting permits, firearm suicide rates, even subscriptions to Guns & Ammo magazine.

WHAT WE KNOW

What are some of the effects of gun policies in the U.S.?
AND HOW STRONG IS THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE?

On the Gun Industry

- Bans on the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines may increase the price of targeted firearms sold prior to the ban.

On Suicides

- Child-access prevention laws may decrease firearm self-injuries and suicides.
- Background checks may decrease suicide.
- Minimum age requirements may decrease firearm suicides among children.
- Prohibitions associated with mental illness may decrease suicide.

On Unintentional Injuries and Deaths

- Child-access prevention laws may decrease firearm injuries and deaths among children.
- Permissive concealed-carry laws may increase unintentional firearm injuries among adults.

On Violent Crime

- Background checks may decrease firearm homicides.
- Prohibitions associated with mental illness may decrease violent crime.
- Stand-your-ground laws may increase homicides.
- Permissive concealed-carry laws may increase violent crime.

Other areas studied revealed inconclusive or no evidence of the effects of gun policies on these outcomes: defensive gun use, hunting and recreation, mass shootings, and officer-involved shootings. For a comprehensive look at these findings, see the table at www.rand.org/effects-gun-policies.
Charting a Course Forward

RAND decided to get involved in late 2015. At the time, a shooting that left 14 people dead at a holiday office party in San Bernardino, Calif., was still in the headlines. The same pundits were making the same old arguments on cable news and the opinion pages. What was needed, RAND leaders decided, was a neutral review of the evidence on a range of gun policy proposals, from background checks and weapon bans to stand-your-ground and concealed-carry laws.

“It was time to do something, if there were something we could do to make a difference,” RAND President Michael D. Rich said. RAND sponsored the work itself, using funds it reserves for research ventures that are especially tough and often controversial.

Researchers reviewed thousands of books, journal articles, and research papers on gun policies and gun violence prevention. Almost none had the scientific rigor to show that a given policy actually changed a given outcome, such as the number of suicides or accidental injuries. The researchers found just 63 studies that met that standard, with few clear answers.

Do assault-weapon bans reduce mass shootings or violent crime? The evidence was too sparse and too uncertain to say for sure. Do waiting periods for gun purchases reduce suicides, homicides, or accidental deaths? Inconclusive, with too few studies and contradictory results. What do we know about gun-free zones, defensive gun use, or policy effects on the gun industry? Almost nothing.

The best evidence showed that child-access prevention laws could reduce accidental and self-inflicted gun deaths and injuries among youth. The researchers also found moderate evidence that gun restrictions for people with mental illness could reduce violent crime; and moderate evidence that stand-your-ground laws might increase homicide rates. They found moderate evidence as well that dealer background checks reduce suicides and gun homicides, but inconclusive evidence for expanded background checks by private sellers.

The researchers had planned to build an online calculator that would help policymakers sort through different combinations of gun policies and see their likely effects. But as they reviewed the evidence, they realized it wasn’t nearly strong enough. Midway through the project, they scrapped the calculator and replaced it with a survey of more than 100 gun policy experts.

The experts fell into the same two camps as the gun debate in general. On one side, the “permissives” favored looser gun regulations and identified themselves most closely with the NRA. On the other, the “restrictives” wanted tougher gun regulations and identified with groups like the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. There was no middle ground.

But the survey found that the two sides mostly agreed on what the objectives of any gun policy should be. They both listed reducing homicides and suicides as the top priority, followed by preventing mass shootings, protecting privacy rights, protecting hunting and sport shooting, and protecting gun rights. It wasn’t a clash of values; it was a disagreement over which policies would best achieve those objectives—a difference of facts.

Statement by Michael D. Rich, President and CEO

“My decision to initiate a research project to study gun policy in the United States came after many years of watching what seemed like an increasingly polarized and acrimonious ‘debate’ that rested on a sparse foundation of analytical findings. I knew that, at RAND, we could bring a unique perspective on the issues as a fiercely nonpartisan organization devoted to objectivity and analytic rigor. So, I set the RAND Gun Policy in America initiative underway, investing in a comprehensive effort that draws from the best of RAND’s interdisciplinary research talent.”
Cause for Optimism

One fundamental difference was especially striking. The permissives thought that, without guns, most homicides and suicides would still happen, just by other means. In fact, their median estimate was that 90 percent of people who take their own lives with guns would still take their own lives without guns. The restrictives thought that eliminating guns would eliminate a major part of the problem. Their median estimate was that only 20 percent of gun suicides would still happen without guns.

“That’s a huge difference, and you have to assume it really colors how the two sides evaluate gun policy,” RAND’s Morral said. “There’s a right answer to that question; we could figure out how much substitution for firearms really happens. But there’s so little research we can point to. We’ve been having these disagreements for decades, and yet we have not invested in trying to evaluate many gun policies.”

He sees some reason for optimism, even after spending two years immersed in the gun policy debate. Earlier this year, for example, Congress passed a budget that greatly expands funding for a nationwide database of violent deaths. That could help researchers better track and understand gun violence. Congress also backed changes to the national background check system, to improve the sharing of information across federal and state agencies.

And it attempted to clarify that the Dickey Amendment—the federal rule against using research dollars to promote gun control—doesn’t require a ban on all gun research.

“There are a lot of things happening right now; there’s a lot of interest in gun violence research,” Morral said. “But before government agencies will invest meaningfully in gun violence research, Congress has to say that it wants gun violence research.”

A 2015 op-ed in the Washington Post made the same point. It was written by Mark Rosenberg, who once oversaw gun violence research at the CDC, and Jay Dickey, the former Republican congressman from Arkansas who sponsored the 1996 amendment that stifled that research and that still bears his name.

“We can get there only through research,” they wrote. “Our nation does not have to choose between reducing gun-violence injuries and safeguarding gun ownership. Indeed, scientific research helped reduce the motor vehicle death rate in the United States and save hundreds of thousands of lives—all without getting rid of cars.”

RAND’s survey identified four policies that generated relatively strong agreement among experts, regardless of their stance on gun regulation:

1. Expanded mental health prohibitions against gun ownership
2. Required reporting of lost or stolen firearms
3. A media campaign to prevent child access to firearms
4. Surrender of firearms by prohibited possessors.
Help for the Homeless

On any given night, tens of thousands of people sleep on the streets of Los Angeles, the nation’s capital of unsheltered homelessness.

But a recent RAND study found a reason for hope on those same streets. Los Angeles County has quietly succeeded in moving some of its most chronically homeless and vulnerable residents into permanent housing, with health care and social services. And it’s done it while saving taxpayers millions of dollars.
“It makes a very compelling argument to say, ‘Look, if we provide housing and support, we can actually save money,’” said Sarah Hunter, a senior behavioral scientist who led RAND’s evaluation of the program and has spent years working with service providers on Los Angeles’s Skid Row.

“Creating hurdles for people in need to receive housing is not the right approach,” she said. “There are better ways to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable in our society.”

Los Angeles County had more than 53,000 people experiencing homelessness at last count. Nearly 40,000 of them were living on the streets, in their cars, or in makeshift camps, the nation’s largest population of unsheltered homeless people by far.

Like cities and counties across America, Los Angeles spends millions of dollars every year on health care for people who are homeless and have nowhere to turn but a public emergency room. Starting in 2012, the county began to identify frequent users of health services, move them into supportive housing, and then address their physical or mental health needs there. It called it Housing for Health.

The program is not run by a housing or social-services agency, but the county health department. Its goal is straightforward: To end homelessness in Los Angeles. So far, it’s moved more than 3,500 people off the streets, most of them chronically ill and chronically homeless. One had needed more than $1 million in public hospital services in the single year before entering the program; another was 95 years old.

And another was a former construction worker from the suburbs named Michael Cyrilik. Years of hard drug use had left his body scarred and wasted, so skinny that people called him Sticks. His bed on most nights was a torn piece of cardboard under the bleachers of a neighborhood ballfield, just down the street from where he grew up.

He credits a bike accident four years ago with saving his life. The accident left him bloodied on the ground with a spinal injury so severe that he still walks with a limp and a cane. But his stay in the hospital also brought him to the attention of Housing Works, a local nonprofit that provides supportive housing through the Housing for Health program.

“Let’s put it this way,” he says now, “it changed my life in every perspective. If it wasn’t for this housing, I don’t know where I’d be. I’d probably already be deceased.”
RAND’s study tracked nearly 900 program participants from the year before they entered housing until the year after. It found that 96 percent of them stayed in the program for at least a year, a remarkable success rate. But that wasn’t the headline.

Program participants made nearly 70 percent fewer visits to the emergency room in the year after they moved into supportive housing. They spent 75 percent less time in the hospital. They needed fewer mental-health checkups, fewer crisis interventions, even fewer months of county general-relief financial support.

Their use of expensive safety-net services had cost the county a combined $34 million in the year before they started the program. That number fell below $14 million in the year after, a reduction in county costs of $20 million. Even adding back in the costs of the program, around $13.5 million, the county still saved more than $6.5 million. Put another way: For every $1 the county spent, it saved around $1.20.

RAND’s evaluation included more people, with more varied needs, and found bigger savings than other studies of supportive housing programs. It was based on data from six front-line county departments, but researchers cautioned that it might not capture every cost and benefit. “That will be something to watch as this program scales up and engages more people and more organizations,” RAND’s Hunter said.

Program participants also reported improvements in their mental health in a limited survey the researchers conducted. But they reported almost no change in physical health. That might be because they suffered from chronic conditions, like diabetes or heart disease, that don’t resolve with only one year off the streets.

Assistant policy researcher Melissa Felician, a PhD fellow at Pardee RAND Graduate School, decided to dig into those findings for her doctoral dissertation. In interviews with program participants, she found unexpected barriers to health even after they had housing. Many went without food because they did not know how to cook but did not want to still rely on churches and shelters. They often felt socially isolated and said they wanted something to do to get them out of their apartments—a job, a volunteer opportunity, some way to contribute to society.

“People spoke a lot about how they wanted those connections,” she said. “You can house people, but there’s so much care that’s needed afterward.” Her interviews, she added, “just taught me, but for the grace of God, anybody could be in that situation.”

Michael Cyrilik offers a quick prayer every morning and every night that he’s not in that situation anymore. He has a small apartment not far from downtown Los Angeles, a place he can finally call home. He hung a small plaque over the front door with the 12 steps of addiction recovery. The drugs, the cravings: “All out of my head, out of my soul now. Period.”

“I don’t want it no more,” he says. “This is my life now. Paying my bills, having responsibilities. I want to do life. I want to go out and enjoy my life. I want to go fishing. And maybe, perhaps, if the man upstairs allows me, I want to get back on a bike.”
The Q & A

Q  How do you see the war in Afghanistan ending?
A  I don’t see it ending on the battlefield. If the war ends in any near term, it will be through a negotiated political settlement. The conflict has been essentially stalemated for about a decade now and I don’t see any indication on the ground or from what I know about dynamics behind the scenes that suggest that the stalemate is going to be broken.

What would a settlement look like?
The Taliban’s main complaint is the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan, so that issue will have to be addressed in a settlement. This is a group that certainly uses terror tactics within Afghanistan but does not have ambitions beyond the borders of Afghanistan. It’s not a transnational threat or a threat to U.S. interests outside of Afghanistan. So it’s conceivable that you could negotiate with them in a way that you couldn’t with al Qa’ida or other transnational terrorist groups.

One of the biggest questions will be what form of power-sharing is satisfactory among Afghans. It’s generally understood that the distribution of political power will have to be more inclusive, bringing the Taliban into the political mainstream. But none of the parties to the conflict have fully developed positions on how to achieve that. Afghanistan has a social and political system based on patronage, and some people will resist slicing the pie into smaller pieces. The Taliban have indicated that they do not oppose participating in electoral politics, but the firmness of that view would have to be tested through negotiation.

Ultimately achieving a negotiated settlement will be very difficult. It’s not anyone’s perfect solution to the situation in Afghanistan. But it’s the best of the available options.

You recently testified before a Senate subcommittee that it will take more political support, more diplomatic muscle, to get something like that moving. What would you like to see?
It’s crucial that it be made clear by the highest levels of the U.S. government that there is strong political backing for such an initiative. There certainly is interest within the U.S. government in seeking a negotiated settlement. But there’s a difference between having an appreciation of the importance of that goal and having a clear plan and an actually mobilized,
sufficiently robust diplomatic effort that is manifestly backed by the White House.

**What are some practical steps toward moving in that direction?**

The United States, the Afghan government, and the Taliban need to be sitting together at a negotiating table. You’d need to get the support of Pakistan for the process and for any substantive ideas. You’d need to gain broader support from the countries with the greatest interest in Afghanistan, countries in the region.

My own view is that one near-term, practical step that would be very helpful would be to name a neutral facilitator who could help bring the parties together and sustain the momentum of the peace process. It would need to be someone with a significant international profile who’s trusted by the U.S., the Afghan government, and the Taliban, who is regarded as neutral and unbiased.

**You’ve described Pakistan as a “frenemy,” and compared the U.S.–Pakistan relationship to a road rage incident, with both sides talking past each other. What needs to change there?**

If anyone has the magic key to unlocking the dilemma that is the U.S.–Pakistan relationship, I hope they raise their hand. I do think there is some common interest between the U.S. and Pakistan in negotiating a political settlement in Afghanistan. Now, it may be for different reasons with different motivations. But if the United States was engaged in a concerted diplomatic effort to negotiate a political settlement, I think there would be the potential to gain Pakistani support and cooperation. That wouldn’t entirely resolve all the issues in the U.S.–Pakistan relationship, but it would significantly reduce some of the important ones.

**What are you working on now?**

I’m doing a project that looks at the history of senior-level policymaking on Afghanistan from 2002 to 2016. We’ll be doing a series of interviews with people who were engaged in making those decisions. I’m also just finishing a project on corruption, trying to help planners and policymakers set realistic expectations on how readily corruption can be addressed in countries we partner with. I’m hoping to branch back out into non–South Asia work, but this year it’s mostly Afghanistan and Pakistan.
Charlene Rohr is a senior research leader at RAND Europe and senior research fellow at the Policy Institute at King’s College London. She has more than 20 years’ experience in transport research, developing travel demand forecasting models in the UK, Scandinavia, and Australia.

Commentary

Congestion Tolls Work in London and Stockholm—Why Not Seattle?

By Charlene Rohr

A version of this commentary originally appeared on The Seattle Times in April 2018. Commentary gives RAND researchers a platform to convey insights based on their professional expertise and often on their peer-reviewed research and analysis.
The first lesson is that charging people to drive is one of the best ways to reduce road congestion given that infrastructure spending is insufficient to eliminate road congestion in large cities with a scarcity of available land. On the first day of opening the London Congestion Charge in February 2003, road traffic decreased by 20 to 25 percent.

Even more telling is Stockholm’s experience after a congestion charge was first introduced as a trial between January and July 2006. A referendum was held in September of that year, where a (slight) majority voted in favor of retaining the charges. This led to the reintroduction of the charges in August 2007, which have been operational ever since.

What happened to congestion during this period? Like London, the introduction of the charges had an immediate impact from the first day: a reduction of more than 20 percent in the amount of car travel into central Stockholm (resulting in an even bigger reduction in congestion). When the trial ended in July and the charges were abolished, traffic immediately rebounded to nearly the same level as before the charges. With the reintroduction in August 2007, traffic levels were again reduced to the same level as during the trial period.

In London charges run as high as around $16 a day, and in Stockholm drivers pay just over $4 every time they travel into or out of the city center, but there are no charges on weekends or public holidays in either city.

It appears the congestion charges work just like a tap: when turned on, road traffic substantially decreased; when turned off, road traffic increased to almost (but not quite) the level before the charges; and when turned on again, a similar level of decrease was observed. It is very difficult to think of another transport intervention that has been so successful in managing road congestion.

A second lesson is that the effects last. A year after the introduction of the congestion charge, Transport for London assessed that traffic was reduced by 30 percent, with a substantial increase in the numbers of taxis, buses, and bicycles. Ten years after the introduction of the charge, they estimated that traffic levels were still down by 10 percent compared with the baseline (although travel speeds did get progressively slower as a result of reallocating road capacity to other modes and for improvements to the urban environment). In Stockholm, too, road traffic levels remained roughly constant, despite inflation, economic growth, a growing population, and increasing car fleet.

So then to the question of equality. One of the criticisms of congestion pricing is that the poorest may be hit the hardest. But the poorest are probably being hit the hardest now: In many cities poorer households tend to live in areas that suffer from higher congestion, more road accidents, and poor air quality caused by road traffic.

The evidence from the Stockholm and London charging examples is that all of society can be better off with the introduction of congestion charging, particularly if the revenues are spent for the advantage of the public, for example, through improved public transport services. Ultimately, it does not have to be that the poor are hit the hardest—it is a political decision on how equitable the congestion charging system will be.

What can be learned about public acceptability? Again, we see similar evidence from the London and Stockholm examples. While public attitudes may be negative before the introduction of congestion charging, particularly if the revenues are spent for the advantage of the public, for example, through improved public transport services. Ultimately, it does not have to be that the poor are hit the hardest—it is a political decision on how equitable the congestion charging system will be.

What can Seattle and its inhabitants learn from these other cities that have implemented road user charging?

Seattle is considering following in the footsteps of cities like London, Stockholm, Singapore, and Milan to introduce a charge for driving on the roads. Some will argue that this is a drastic policy response for a perennial and “unsolvable” problem. Or that congestion charges will hurt the poorest in society, while giving the rich an easy ride.

What can Seattle and its inhabitants learn from these other cities that have implemented road user charging?
Newt Minow was already one of the most recognizable names in the Kennedy administration when he first came to RAND in the early 1960s.

He was the thirty-something head of the Federal Communications Commission, a crusader for the public interest. He had introduced himself to the nation’s broadcast executives not long before with a speech denouncing the “vast wasteland” that television had become. The industry showed its appreciation by naming the wrecked ship on Gilligan’s Island after him, the S.S. Minnow.

Minow came to RAND looking for help with what would become one of his signature accomplishments, the development of communications satellites. He’s been a part of RAND’s story ever since, nearly 60 years of leadership and support. His contributions have helped the Pardee RAND Graduate School and RAND’s President’s Fund. He’s also a member of RAND’s Legacy Society, having included RAND in his will.

“RAND is a very important institution,” said Minow, who still works part-time at a Chicago law firm. “It stays out of politics. It looks for the truth and uses reason and analysis to solve major problems. To me, it’s a national treasure.”

Minow was a campaign staffer in the lead-up to John F. Kennedy’s 1960 presidential run when he befriended the candidate’s brother, Robert F. Kennedy. They were both young fathers and spoke about the influence that television had on their children. When John Kennedy won the presidency, he appointed Minow the chairman of the FCC, which regulates television and broadcasting.

A few months later, Minow delivered the speech that made him famous to a convention of the National Association of Broadcasters. He challenged them to sit through an entire day of their own programming. “What you will observe,” he said, “is a vast wasteland.” He was surprised when those
were the two words that made headlines; he thought the takeaway phrase in his speech was “public interest.”

That was Minow’s focus in two years as head of the FCC. He helped open up the airwaves to UHF channels, the high numbers on the television knob. He encouraged the expansion of public television. He pushed for the first broadcast satellites, explaining to President Kennedy that he wanted to put ideas, not just men, into space.

“My view,” Minow said, “was that if you believe in the First Amendment, if you believe in freedom of speech, then you want to give as much choice as possible. We certainly succeeded in that.

“But what has happened is, in the early days of television, when you only had three networks, people shared the same facts. Now they don’t. That’s a real danger to the country. If we don’t all believe in the same facts, we’re in trouble.”

RAND has described that as “truth decay” and has made it a research focus in recent years, an effort Minow has supported with both funding and advice. Why? He points to the same two words that were supposed to be the centerpiece of his most famous speech: public interest.

“I think one of the most important things that RAND could do for the country is to find a solution to truth decay,” he says. Does he have any ideas? He chuckles: “I’m looking to the people at RAND to figure it out.”
Enriching Kids

The benefits of using public funds to pay for out-of-school time (OST) programs

Ballet, chess club, robotics, soccer, drama, foreign language, computer coding, ceramics, and scouting—these are just some of the OST programs that many families want their kids to experience. High-quality specialty programs, academic programs, and multipurpose programs (that provide various activities to youth) can provide benefits aligned with their program content, including improving supervision and safety, social-emotional development, and school performance and exposing kids to new experiences and opportunities.

OST programs provide cumulative opportunities to a child.

Public support for OST programs has been fueled by three key factors:

1. After school, unsupervised kids may engage in risky behaviors.
2. Youth access to enrichment activities is highly dependent on family income.
3. Low-income students trail substantially behind their more-affluent peers, in terms of academic achievement.

Not every family can afford OST programs.

19.4 million children, or 41% of kids not currently in an after-school program, would be enrolled in a program if one were available to them.

(An 11% increase in the 10 years from 2004 to 2014)

83% of people surveyed in one poll were against cutting funding for after-school and summer school programs.

Low-income students face opportunity and attainment gaps. OST programs can be designed to address both.

OPPORTUNITY GAP
Families with higher incomes have more opportunities for OST programs, spending 7x more on enrichment activities than do low-income families

ATTAINMENT GAP
Kids from higher-income families are more likely to graduate from high school

85% graduate from high school
70% graduate from high school

and graduate from college

77% earn a bachelor’s degree by age 25
10% earn a bachelor’s degree by age 25

HIGH-INCOME FAMILIES
LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

84% participate in sports
59% participate in sports

Excerpted from The Value of Out-of-School Time Programs, Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al. Read the full report at www.rand.org/t/PE267
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