Using research and analysis to strengthen Pittsburgh and improve the well-being of communities throughout the region
For more than 70 years, the RAND Corporation has been developing solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND opened its third U.S. office in Pittsburgh in 2000 and has since become deeply rooted in the community. With support from philanthropists and foundations, and through community partnerships, RAND brings global experience to help Pittsburgh build on its strengths as a hub of education, technology, and medicine. Together we are making Pittsburgh stronger and more resilient, improving the lives of people in the region and beyond, and preparing for success into the future.
The Health of Our Communities

Health is a function of more than medical care—health behaviors and the social and physical environments exert strong influences on community health. RAND experts are conducting research and analysis to help decisionmakers and policymakers not only improve the health, but also the quality of life, of individuals and communities in the Pittsburgh region.
Lead in Pittsburgh’s Drinking Water

Pittsburgh is working to manage and improve its aging water system, with a focus on addressing a significant public concern—elevated lead levels in the city’s drinking water. With philanthropic funding, a team of RAND researchers assessed proposed solutions for getting the lead out of Pittsburgh’s tap water. The researchers conducted a side-by-side comparison of the options, from flushing water pipes and adding water filters in homes to complete lead service line replacements. Using lessons learned from other cities, RAND presented recommendations for near-term steps and long-term solutions, providing local policymakers with guidance on how to improve the city’s water quality.

Learn more at www.rand.org/t/PE247
Infant Mortality in Allegheny County

Allegheny County has been home to decades of transformative medical innovations, but the county’s infant mortality rates remain above the U.S. average. In Pittsburgh specifically, there are an average of 6.65 infant deaths for 1,000 live births, compared with the U.S. average of 5.82. There is also a racial disparity in the number of infant deaths. With support from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, RAND has partnered with the University of Pittsburgh to help address the underlying causes of infant mortality, identify effective interventions, and recommend ways to reduce the number of infant deaths in the region.

“As the president of a foundation dedicated to health and health care, I rely on RAND’s top-tier research and their excellent local presentations to make good decisions. I’m proud to be a financial supporter professionally and a recipient of RAND’s intellectual contributions personally.”

Karen Wolk Feinstein
President and CEO | Jewish Healthcare Foundation
Healthier Neighborhoods

Our neighborhoods can affect our health and well-being, and RAND researchers are working to better understand how. Partnering with two Pittsburgh neighborhoods, the Hill District and Homewood communities, RAND researchers are following residents and examining how neighborhood changes influence their health and economic outcomes. The PHRESH (Pittsburgh Hill/Homewood Research on Neighborhood Change and Health) study began in 2011 when plans were made to open a full-service grocery store in the Hill District, the first of its kind in 30 years. RAND examined how this change affected residents’ health, nutrition, and overall perceptions about their neighborhood. The PHRESH study has expanded to include analysis of other important health indicators and broader neighborhood improvements, including new housing developments, greenspace and park renovations, and other aesthetic investments. RAND continues to examine whether and how neighborhood improvements can influence health and well-being, and is committed to broadly sharing findings and recommendations with policymakers and community members.

Learn more at www.rand.org/PHRESH
Community Resilience

RAND is using research and analysis to help Pittsburgh develop tools to increase resilience, improve the city’s capacity to respond to environmental stresses, and better address complex challenges such as aging infrastructure and population growth.
A Citywide Resilience Strategy

Following the collapse of the region’s steel industry, Pittsburgh lost 40 percent of its population between 1970 and 2006. While Pittsburgh is growing again, the city still faces stresses associated with its industrial legacy. As a result, Pittsburgh was selected to participate in the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities, an initiative to help cities around the world become more resilient to physical, social, and economic challenges. RAND served as the city’s strategic partner, playing a key role in developing and implementing the first citywide resilience strategy. The roughly two-year effort culminated in OnePGH, which launched in March 2017. The initiative sets an agenda for action to help guide long-term, sustainable development in the region. RAND continues to support the city by monitoring and evaluating progress toward OnePGH resilience and related objectives to improve well-being in Pittsburgh.

Learn more at www.rand.org/pittsburgh-resilience
Stormwater Management in the Pittsburgh Region

The city of Pittsburgh and other municipalities in Allegheny County face significant challenges in meeting water-quality requirements. Stormwater mixes with wastewater from 84 municipalities in the region’s aging and undersized combined sewer system, flowing to a single treatment plant. This has led to more than 9 billion gallons of untreated sewer overflows every year, a problem that could grow with future climate, population, or land-use changes. With support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, RAND researchers conducted an independent study of the growing stormwater problem. They applied new analytical methods and used computer simulation modeling to explore a range of potential long-term solutions. The pilot research project is helping to inform regional stakeholders’ planning and investment in the infrastructure needed to achieve a lasting and resilient solution to the ongoing challenge of stormwater management in the Pittsburgh region.

Learn more at www.rand.org/t/RR1673
Schools and Workforce

From collaborating with educational game developers to surveying the extent to which colleges are positioned to train future employees for high-priority occupations, RAND specialists are working with regional employers and educators to remove barriers to quality education and improve skills and opportunities for the region’s population.
Student Suspension Rates

Suspending students can negatively affect their engagement with school and academic achievement, ultimately leading to drop-out and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Out-of-school suspensions are also disproportionately given to nonwhite students. To help improve student and student-staff relationships, and ultimately reduce suspension rates and race-based disparities, Pittsburgh Public Schools is implementing restorative practices. RAND researchers are studying the implementation and outcomes of these nonpunitive approaches to handling conflict—the first study to report findings from a randomized controlled trial of restorative practices in schools.
Access to Summer Programs

Students from low-income families fall behind their more-affluent peers during the summer months, likely because they have fewer opportunities for stimulating academic, cultural, or athletic activities. Summer programs can promote student achievement, and thousands of youth have the opportunity to benefit from summer programming in Pittsburgh each summer. RAND researchers have examined the effects of the programming and uncovered gaps in the city’s ability to serve students who might benefit the most. While some neighborhoods have enough summer programs to serve local low-income youth, others do not contain a single summer program focusing on academic skills. A RAND study guided decisionmakers to better allocate summer program investments to provide students with the greatest need access to enrichment experiences that might be otherwise unavailable to them.

Learn more at www.rand.org/t/RR1969
A 21st-Century Workforce

As technology changes and industries evolve, workers need to be prepared to compete in the globally connected workplace. In the greater Pittsburgh region, there is a persistent gap between the skills in demand in the labor market and the available talent pool, and a shortage of workers with STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skill sets. With funding from Chevron and support from regional partners, including the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the Appalachia Partnership Initiative (API) was launched in 2014 to invest in K–12 STEM education and workforce development programs in the tristate region of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. RAND is assessing the API’s progress in creating a sustainable STEM education and energy and manufacturing workforce development ecosystem.

Learn more at www.rand.org/api

Our region is poised to experience tremendous economic growth, especially in the energy and manufacturing sectors. The Appalachia Partnership Initiative is helping prepare the region’s workforce for the exciting and rewarding career opportunities to come through high-quality STEM education and workforce training programs. RAND is critical to this partnership as we collectively build a model of workforce training for the 21st century.”

Stacey Olson
President | Chevron Appalachia
A Better Future

RAND experts are looking over the horizon to develop comprehensive solutions to the most complex challenges of today—to help build a better tomorrow for individuals and families in Pittsburgh and throughout the world.
The Opioid Crisis

In early 2018, Pennsylvania’s governor issued a statewide disaster declaration to help combat the opioid epidemic. Opioid misuse and addiction have made drug overdoses a bigger killer in the United States than car crashes or gun violence. RAND researchers are seeking solutions across a spectrum of policy areas to effectively combat this public health crisis. RAND research has found that broad support for non-opioid pain management and guidelines for appropriate pain management can decrease opioid overprescribing. For those suffering from opioid addiction, RAND research shows that increasing access to treatment and improving the quality of treatment can help to reduce opioid addiction—and save lives.

Learn more at www.rand.org/opioid-policy
Truth Decay

While Americans have always held differing views on policy issues and engaged in thoughtful debate, increasing disagreement over basic, evidence-based facts presents a new challenge. This is a symptom of the phenomenon RAND has called “Truth Decay,” the diminishing role of facts and analysis in American public life. RAND’s initial exploration shows that Truth Decay is not new, but what is new is the increasing disagreement about objective facts and data. The decline in agreement about basic facts, in public trust in major institutions, and in civic and media literacy may imperil our democratic institutions and processes. This period of Truth Decay is unlikely to end on its own. With donor support, RAND is studying the causes and consequences of Truth Decay to help restore facts and analysis to political and civil discourse and to American public life.

Learn more at www.rand.org/truthdecay

“We urge individuals and organizations to join with us in promoting the need for facts, data, and analysis in civic and political discourse—and in American public life.”

Michael D. Rich
President and CEO | RAND Corporation
**Fair and Effective Gun Policies**

With limited scientific evidence on the effects of gun laws, U.S. lawmakers lack a reliable baseline from which to begin formulating successful policies. With philanthropic support, RAND is creating resources that can help break the gridlock among policymakers, researchers, and the general public. RAND’s Gun Policy in America initiative provides information on what scientific research can tell us about the effects of American laws and proposals. RAND has also been selected to help oversee the National Collaborative on Gun Violence Research, a philanthropic fund created by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation that will support high-quality research on issues related to gun violence. Over the next five years, research sponsored by the collaborative will seek data-driven insight into the causes and patterns of gun-related violence in the United States. Based on scientific evidence, the work will help policymakers craft evidence-based policies to reduce gun violence.

For more, visit www.rand.org/gun-policy

“Understandably, gun violence is a deeply emotional issue. But arguing about the proper response will not solve the problem. Our goal is to provide objective information to guide a rational, fact-based response to a national crisis.”

**Laura Arnold**
Cofounder | Laura and John Arnold Foundation
The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.

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