

# THE URBAN INSTITUTE'S NEXT50

In the decades ahead, powerful shifts in technology, climate, demographics, and the global economy **threaten to exacerbate inequalities and block opportunities** for people to thrive. Unease about these disruptions fuels a level of **polarization** not seen for a century and **derails progress on racial and economic injustices** so long at the center of the American story.

**But we can imagine a more optimistic future**, where the disruptive forces of change are harnessed to expand opportunities so all of us can realize our potential to contribute, to be valued, to feel a sense of belonging, and to have a voice.

This vision guided the Urban Institute as we began our 50th anniversary year with an exploration of how we could best support those driving change across society. We wanted to know...

- What would it take to advance equity and upward mobility and achieve racial justice and shared prosperity in the decades ahead?
- What knowledge do changemakers need to catalyze bold solutions?

To see what we learned about how data and evidence can accelerate promising solutions to the country's big challenges, visit [urban.org/next50](https://urban.org/next50).

As part of this effort, Urban also recommitted to our mission and clarified how we must work in the future, as we embark on our **Next50**.

# The Urban Institute will strive to advance **upward mobility, equity, and shared prosperity.**

We will conduct **rigorous research** with **analytic excellence** and **independence** and share insights from evidence to help **changemakers** catalyze and accelerate **solutions** by

- leveraging cutting-edge **technology** and **data science**
- understanding and confronting **structural racism**
- delivering **timely, relevant, and actionable** research findings to influencers

We will do so in **communities, capitals, boardrooms,** and wherever innovators are pursuing bold ideas.

And we will aim to ensure that our work **reflects and embraces** a **changing America.**

## IN OUR NEXT50 URBAN WILL...

### FOCUS ON ADVANCING UPWARD MOBILITY, EQUITY, AND SHARED PROSPERITY

Originally founded to assess whether President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty was working, Urban has a rich history of seeking strategies to help families escape poverty. Building on insights from the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, Urban will continue to pursue the vexing question: What would it take to dramatically increase mobility from poverty?

Similarly, central to Urban's charge is tackling the barriers and injustices that prevent all of us from realizing our potential. We will continue to explore the persistence of stark racial disparities and pursue strategies to systematically shrink inequity and injustice so all families can thrive.

Through our first 50 years, Urban developed a special understanding of how important the neighborhoods, cities and suburbs, small towns, and rural areas that we call home are to our well-being and opportunity. And compelling evidence argues that a community's commitment to equity

and inclusion can fuel continued growth and prosperity for all. In our Next50, we will bring insights and evidence that support inclusive growth so that prosperity is both shared and sustainable.

By engaging with communities across the country and leaders from government, business, philanthropy, and civil society, Urban will help advance solutions that empower people and families, expand access to quality jobs and health, support lifelong learning, and ensure that zip code doesn't determine a person's destiny.

### CONDUCT RIGOROUS RESEARCH WITH ANALYTIC EXCELLENCE AND INDEPENDENCE

For more than 50 years, Urban has been a **trusted source for evidence** because our work is high quality and reflects rigor, transparency, and integrity. Urban insists upon and preserves research independence, publishes data and methods for others to test, and promptly corrects errors. These values will remain fundamental to Urban's Next50.

## SUPPORT CHANGEMAKERS TO ACCELERATE SOLUTIONS

Urban will focus on answering the questions most relevant to those driving change by designing inquiries in response to their demands for relevant evidence. For instance, our **Research to Action Lab** develops evidence-based tools and trainings, plans strategic convenings, supports learning communities, and advises leaders in **advocacy, philanthropy, and the corporate sector** to draw upon evidence in navigating challenges and advancing social change. We will continue to build capacity to partner with **changemakers of all kinds** and target the gaps in data and analysis that stand in their way.

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### changemaker (noun)

Entrepreneur. Advocate.

Policymaker.

CEO. Mayor.

Philanthropist. **You.**

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## LEVERAGE CUTTING- EDGE RESEARCH TECHNOLOGIES AND DATA SCIENCE

When Urban pioneered the use of microsimulation modeling in the 1970s, our researchers were leading their field. Today, we are applying cutting-edge research technologies again, using **cloud computing, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and predictive analytics**, among others, to provide immediate, real-time insights and powerful forecasting tools. In the decades ahead, we will assemble, scrub, and share vast amounts of data from an array of sources and help users understand data's limitations and biases. We will create tools that let others ask "what if" questions and explore the implications of alternative futures. And as early adopters of state-of-the-art data sources and methods, we will help social science researchers find new ways to produce actionable insights for policy and practice.

## UNDERSTAND AND CONFRONT **STRUCTURAL RACISM**

Urban is committed to addressing forthrightly the deeply embedded **history of discrimination and exclusion** in America and exploring what is required to remedy these injustices. We are examining whether we are doing enough to refute negative stereotypes, engage with diverse communities, explain how long standing racist policies continue to shape people's lives, and explore possible solutions to remedy racism's consequences in the world today. Urban will strive to understand and confront this ongoing legacy in our own institution and in our society. We will aim to include community members in the research process to design inquiries, collect data, and provide more contextualized interpretation. And we will scrutinize our language and use of race as a category to ensure that our work does not stigmatize or reinforce racist norms.

## DELIVER **ACCESSIBLE INSIGHTS TO INFLUENCERS AND CHANGEMAKERS**

Urban will embrace both next-generation technologies and personal engagements to reach diverse partners,

audiences, and influencers with the evidence and insights most relevant to them, provided in accessible and actionable formats. Our tools range from targeted social media outreach and sophisticated list building to community-based participatory research and curated in-person gatherings. Building on our long-established convening capacity, we will continue to bring together community residents, practitioners, and public-and private-sector leaders around evidence to explore issues and solutions. We also will deploy sophisticated data visualizations, interactive digital features, and data portals that **bring rigorous evidence to life** and **empower users** to see the impact of their own policy preferences.

## CONTINUE TO INFORM **FEDERAL POLICYMAKING**

Urban continues its enduring role as a **trusted source** of evidence for leaders who hope to assess and strengthen federal policies and programs. Federal lawmakers and their staffs, presidential candidates, government agencies, media, and policy decisionmakers have long come to Urban to learn about what works and understand the evidence-based implications of national policy proposals in tax, health,

poverty, retirement, criminal justice, and much more. Urban will continue to invest in state-of-the-art modeling, evaluation, and other research to help these influencers and changemakers, and the larger public, craft solutions to emerging challenges.

## DEEPEN COLLABORATION WITH STATES AND LOCALITIES

With federal policymaking bogged down in partisan politics, many promising solutions are emerging in states, cities, counties, and small towns, where elected leaders feel the urgency of their communities' challenges and are willing to pioneer pragmatic—and less ideological—policy ideas. Urban is **ramping up our engagement** with local and state organizations and providing policymakers advice in crafting on-the-ground strategies based on insights from evidence and best practices around the country. We will build upon deep-rooted relationships in cities like Washington, DC, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, and, more recently, Fresno and Miami, to collaborate closely with local

leaders committed to advancing shared prosperity through affordable housing, access to education and training, and economic development. And we will provide them with analytic tools to anticipate and be prepared for future challenges.

## REFLECT AND EMBRACE A CHANGING AMERICA

**The face of America continues to evolve** as new immigrants arrive in search of opportunity, baby boomers reinvent retirement, all forms of gender and sexual identity are more widely embraced, and our definition of “family” expands and evolves. Urban will bring the data and analytics to strengthen dialogue and decisions related to our country's changing demographics by, for example, quantifying how new and longtime immigrants affect our economy or ensuring that the 2020 Census is robust and accurate. Urban will also sustain our commitment to building a staff that reflects the diversity of our nation and that brings a wide range of perspectives to the issues we study.

## THANK YOU

Citi Foundation support enabled Urban to pursue a yearlong exploration of how to equip changemakers with the knowledge they need to achieve equity and upward mobility in the next 50 years.

# Citi Foundation

