



Creating an Equitable Future for Health and Well-Being:

Highlights of Research Findings from
FORESIGHT's Large-Scale Engagement Project

Created in partnership with **Public Agenda**,
a nonpartisan research and public engagement
organization dedicated to strengthening democracy
and expanding opportunity for all Americans

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For the full report, click [here](#)



What is FORESIGHT?

FORESIGHT is a nationwide, equity-focused collaborative effort to envision and bring about a new future for health and well-being. Launched in 2019 and collaboratively funded by [17 philanthropies](#), FORESIGHT began with the understanding that our system for health and well-being needs to be reimaged and transformed if we hope to achieve a world in which all people and places thrive—no exceptions.

Over the last two years, FORESIGHT collaborated with thousands of people across the United States to develop a vision for the future that reflects the hopes and realities of Americans, particularly those experiencing the greatest inequities in the system we have now.

FORESIGHT's engagement effort reveals much about people's hopes, desires, and aspirations for what the future might hold. It also gives important guidance to those working to build a new future—about what people hope to see, how they believe those changes can happen, and how to engage in robust and inclusive conversations about the future with a diversity of people.



How We Did It

The project began by conducting a scan of the trends, challenges, and opportunities that could impact health and well-being, which were included in a Horizon Scanning report (see *Game Changers* on p. 8). A diverse group of individuals, drawn from many parts of the health ecosystem, reflected on the scan's findings. They identified factors that had the greatest potential to transform health and well-being on a long-term horizon. These trends were woven into **four stories** that illustrated what health and well-being might look like 30 years from now, presented in four separate scenario videos (see next page).

The stories were not intended to be predictions or to capture ideal states. Rather, they depict possibilities (good and bad) for consideration.

In the summer of 2020, FORESIGHT used the scenario videos to engage with more than 7,500 people across the United States, sparking their imaginations and inspiring conversations about their hopes and aspirations. Participants expressed strong support for some ideas—including many that don't commonly appear in conversations on health and well-being—while rejecting others and proposing their own ideas.

Methodology

FORESIGHT invited input from a diversity of people across the country using a national poll and three independent methodologies that focused on hearing from community members in their own voices and centering the experience of those facing the greatest inequities in our current system.

- 1. Community conversations:** In partnership with [Marnita's Table](#), a Minneapolis-based nonprofit that works to increase equality and bring people together across difference, FORESIGHT hosted 23 community conversations with over 1,000 people in nine regions.
- 2. Focus group:** FORESIGHT's partners at the [Disability Policy Consortium](#) conducted a focus group with nine members of the disability community in Massachusetts.
- 3. Online survey:** The sensemaking platform [spryng.io](#) hosted an online survey that was disseminated through the FORESIGHT network and reached nearly 500 people.
- 4. National polling:** [NORC](#) at the University of Chicago fielded a nationally representative poll of over 6,000 American adults.

Because FORESIGHT was committed to centering equity in its process, this analysis places greater emphasis on the community conversations and focus group, which intentionally brought in voices that are rarely heard in conversations of this kind, such as those of low-income families, communities of color, Indigenous leaders, disability advocates, members of rural communities, elders, and youth.

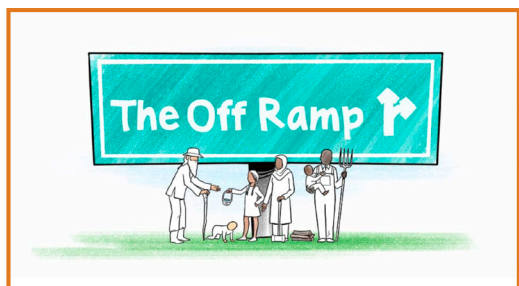
The FORESIGHT team conducted outreach between May and October of 2020. As participants responded, they were influenced by the crises impacting communities across the United States at that time, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial reckoning that unfolded in many parts of the country, economic distress, and extreme weather events.

Scenario Videos



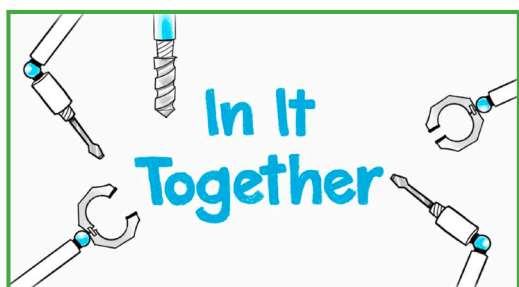
Scenario Video 1: Crowd Control

Climate crises impact migration patterns in the United States, resulting in more people moving away from the coasts and into northern and midwestern cities. Collaboration, paired with advances in agricultural and environmental technologies, is required to mitigate future climate disasters. Despite the need to come together to overcome large-scale threats, newly crowded city centers amplify differences in health care quality, employment opportunity, and food security between the “haves” and “have nots.” Social tensions and unrest result.



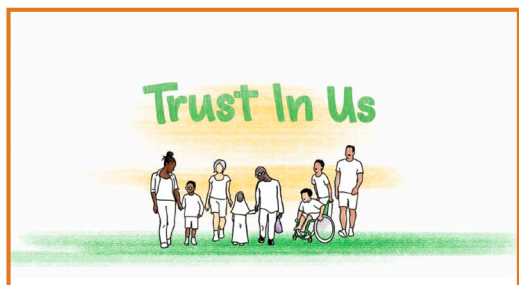
Scenario Video 2: The Off Ramp

After the pandemics of the 2020s, people move out of crowded cities to live in sustainable eco-hub communities focused on shared ownership, slow growth, and environmental sustainability. While the national government provides basic services, such as medical care, eco-hubs are largely self-sufficient and self-sustaining. They incorporate advanced technologies, such as education and health care robots, and exo-wombs, which allow a baby to be gestated outside of a person's body and could redefine traditional gender roles. Success of these eco-hubs relies in part on ensuring that they are inclusive and free of bias.



Scenario Video 3: In It Together

A shared frustration with the government's inability to protect everyone equally during the global pandemics of the 2020s results in the election of a diverse and representative group of candidates. Corporate profit sharing, the rise of cooperatives, and protections for gig workers (e.g., unions, universal health insurance, and universal basic income), make it possible for people to earn a living through flexible, short-term, temporary work. Wealthy individuals and corporations resist these changes by creating gated communities, which grant them exclusive access to the most innovative health-related technologies.



Scenario Video 4: Trust in US

Social unrest emerging from the global pandemics of the 2020s creates a wide-spread commitment to social and governmental reform and a shift toward the prioritization of well-being. A governmental commitment to transparency and accountability results in reductions in inequities and increases in opportunities. However, the result, a hyper-connected and monitored populace, means that people are under constant surveillance by the government.

An Equitable Vision for Health and Well-Being in Five Themes

The FORESIGHT engagement process revealed many different experiences and ideas about the future, but the data also revealed strong common ground across five interconnected themes that together comprise a vision for an equitable future for health and well-being.

The perspectives that participants shared made clear that they think of their health as interdependent and part of complex systems. Participants in this process understood, for example, the deep connections between health and economic security, food access and sustainability, and systemic racism. They hoped for systemic solutions that would address these interconnected issues.



Theme 1: Economic Well-Being

Participants care deeply about growing economic inequality and hope for an economic system that will reduce disparities. They feel that such a shift should begin by acknowledging the stark economic divides that currently exist in the United States, including the racial wealth gap. They desire an economic system that is focused on opportunities for meaningful work while providing economic, personal, and social benefits.

Participants understand that technological innovation, including automation, will have an impact on work and the economy, and many expressed concerns about automation replacing traditional jobs. They see the need to balance the economic benefits of technology with both human connection and meaningful, well-paid work. Many have a vision of economic well-being that involves all workers earning a living wage and being able to rely on support from a robust social safety net (such as a universal basic income in times of un- or under-employment).

Many participants see potential in the idea of corporations shifting to cooperative shared ownership models and alternative ways of measuring economic success, such as using well-being scores in the measurement of economic health to create a broader and more humanistic view of prosperity than what is afforded by conventional, production-focused metrics like gross domestic product.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their vision for economic well-being.



Theme 2: Inclusive, Just Communities

Many participants are attracted to the idea of living in small, diverse, self-organizing, and environmentally attuned communal arrangements. These communities would build on people's deep desire for human connection and cooperation, mutual aid, and community support. Participants believe that the growth of such communities would improve quality of life by reducing the social isolation, segregation, and lack of community ties that characterize much of modern American life.

Many identified stronger intergenerational relationships as a key element of their envisioned future. They see stronger networks of family and chosen family as a way of filling basic needs and deepening relationships and community connections. However, while many feel hopeful about a future that includes deepening community connections, some are concerned that the formation and strengthening of small, self-selected communities would deepen racial, political, and socioeconomic divides.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their vision for inclusive, just communities.



Theme 3: Holistic, Innovative, Culturally Rooted Health Care

Many participants hope for a future in which everyone has access to holistic and preventative care, including mental health services. In many cases, they are interested in exploring ways to decouple health insurance from employment. They envision a health care system that provides care that is compassionate, high-quality, affordable, and culturally responsive—while also providing wide access, including to older people, immigrants, and people for whom English is a second language.

Participants want health care technologies that can support their affordability and accessibility goals, but they argue that such technologies need to be responsibly integrated in ways that respect personal rights and privacy. They worry about increased monitoring and surveillance in pursuit of well-being and technologies that could replace personal connections and bodily functions, such as reproduction.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their vision for holistic, innovative, culturally rooted health care.



Theme 4: Regenerative Practices for People and Planet

Participants understand that their health is intimately tied to the planet's health. They carry deep concerns and fears about climate breakdown and its possible consequences, and many stressed the need for responsible management of natural resources.

Participants are particularly concerned about mass climate breakdown, climate migration, and lack of access to quality food and water. Community conversation participants, many of them members of historically marginalized communities, tend to believe that these threats will have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable community members. They hope for a future with universal access to clean air and water and to healthy and sustainable food systems.

Participants believe that healthy local environments are dependent on healthy global environments. Polling found that Americans generally feel hopeful about interventions and efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including investment in renewable and alternative energy, widespread commitments to environmental sustainability, and agricultural advances to combat climate change.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their vision for regenerative practices for people and planet.



Theme 5: Equitable Access to Basic Needs and Supports

When participants were asked to envision the future of health, they didn't focus on advanced technologies or new-age medicines. Rather, they were most concerned about basic needs and emphasized an expansive definition of health that included food, housing, lifelong education, and social connection.

Participants hold a vision for education that extends beyond traditional K-12 schooling to a system that supports learning and growth as a basic need throughout the lifespan. Many also envision a future for health in which people are loved and cared for and have safe communities in which to live, play, and grow. Participants hope for a future in which basic needs are met through a combination of small-scale community efforts and large-scale governmental programs working together.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their vision for equitable access to basic needs and supports.

Hopes and Fears for the Future



Underlying all five of these interconnected themes was a deep commitment to a future that would be just, equitable, and inclusive. Participants hold deep and ambitious hopes and are eager to engage in a conversation about what it would take to build a future in which all people and places thrive—no exceptions. But they also are concerned about the impacts and legacies of centuries of inequity.

When they explore trends and opportunities, many participants—particularly those from historically marginalized communities—offer potential solutions but express a fear that the most troubling changes on the horizon, including climate change, will hit their communities the hardest. Furthermore, they assume that new technologies and opportunities will likely pass them by and be available only to the most powerful and privileged.

LISTEN HERE



Hear from participants about their ideas for a just, equitable, and inclusive future.

Participants in the nationally-representative poll were asked to indicate the ideas from the scenario videos that felt most hopeful and most troubling. These were presented in multiple-choice format, and participants were asked to select from a list. Below are the ideas that rose to the top for participants who watched each set of videos (scenarios 1 and 3 in green and scenarios 2 and 4 in orange).

Fig. 1: Percent of Americans who, thinking about the video they just watched, identified each of the following ideas from the video stories as one of the top three ideas that made them hopeful for the future.

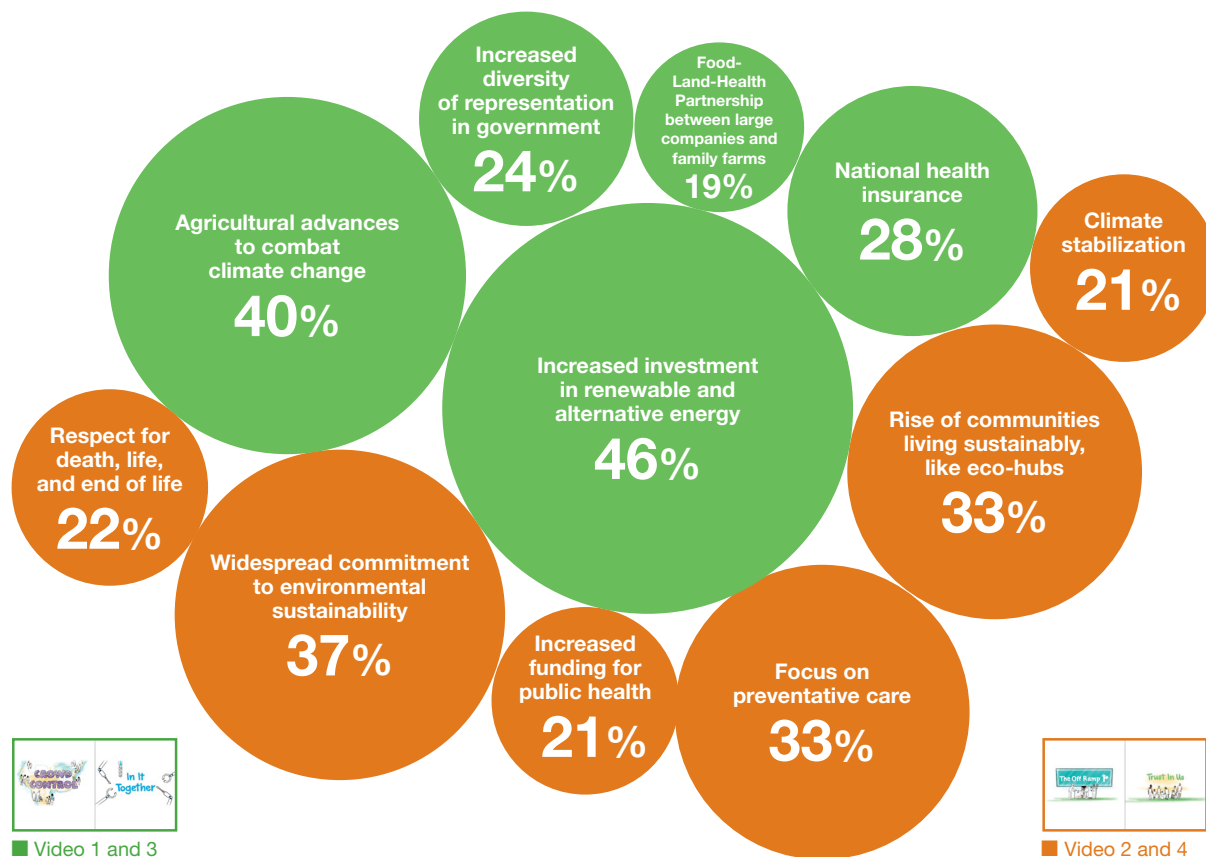
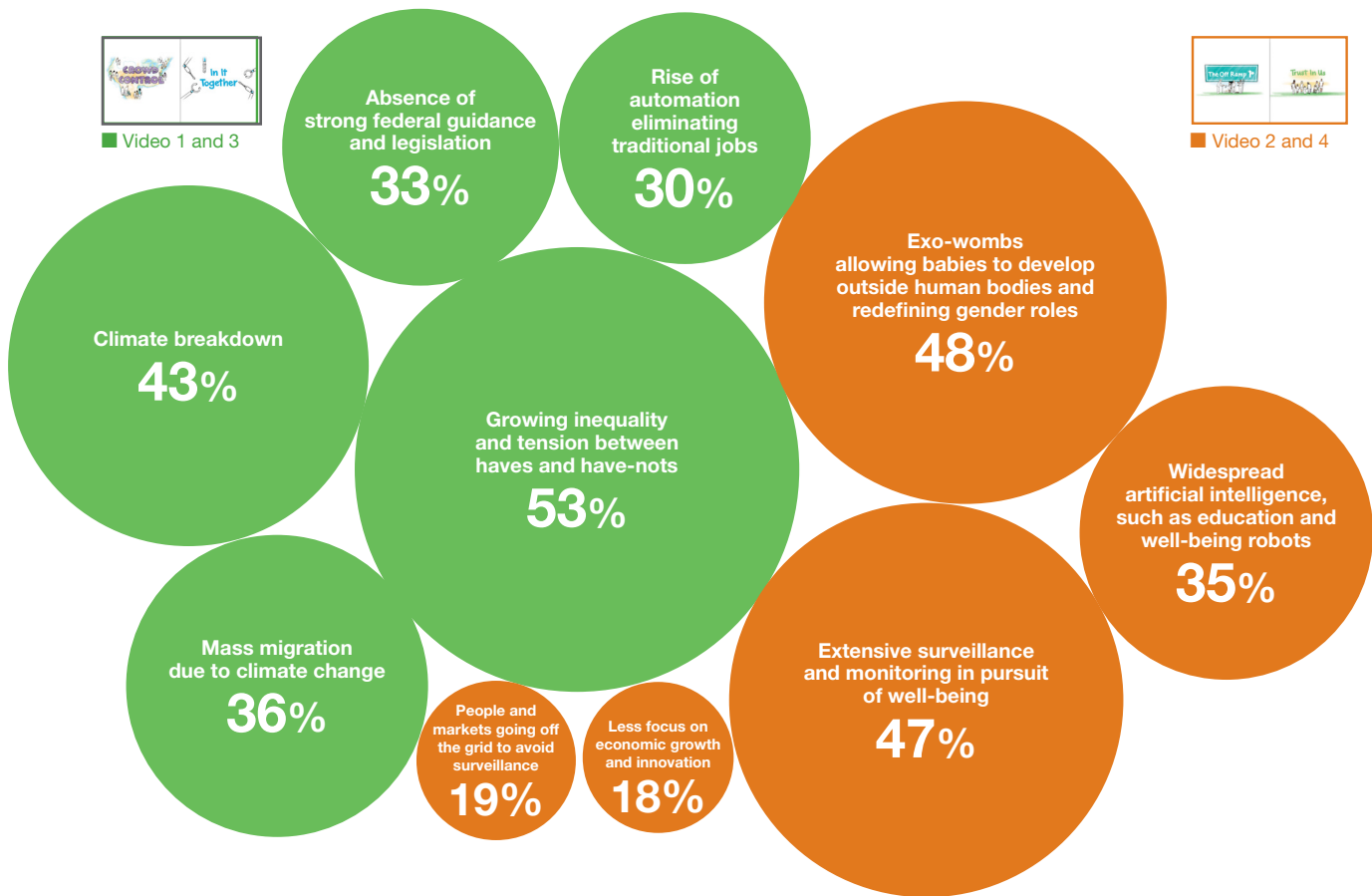


Fig. 2: Percent of Americans who, thinking about the video they just watched, identified each of the following ideas from the video stories as one of the top three ideas that worried them for the future.



9 Game Changers

FORESIGHT used a futuring process with Futures Scanning and Scenario Planning techniques. These helped us develop a shared understanding of what forces will impact our system for health and well-being, and what actions we can take to obtain the desired future. Our team of futurists identified nine “Game Changers” that could alter the future of health—including the infusion of machines into all aspects of life, the simultaneous rise of authoritarianism and citizen-led movements, and the breakdown of our environment due to climate change. These were derived from FORESIGHT’s more comprehensive Horizon Scanning report. Click [here](#) to watch short videos about each of the [Game Changers](#)



Takeaways

Below are key takeaways of FORESIGHT's engagement initiative that can guide future work.

1. The visions participants articulated are ambitious, even if not new. It is striking that, even when invited to imagine any possible future over a long time horizon, participants tended to concentrate on very familiar themes: economic security, community and belonging, a health care system that serves them, a healthy planet, and access to the things that make it possible for people to thrive, including humane housing, quality food, and lifelong learning. Many of these ideas are not new, but—as Nobel Laureate Andre Gide said—“Everything that needs to be said has already been said, but since nobody was listening it has to be said again.” Participants in FORESIGHT's large-scale engagement effort recognized that addressing the five themes described above, while ambitious, will be essential to ensuring that the United States is able to respond equitably to the complex changes on the horizon.



2. A commitment to justice, equity, and inclusion must be at the heart of our efforts to transform health and well-being. Growing inequality and tension between haves and have-nots was among the top ideas from the video stories that most worried participants, and, in the polling, it was the most commonly cited worry within the five themes. Participants identified key structural inequities, including systemic racism, that must be addressed to achieve a future in which all people and places thrive—no exceptions.



Particularly for those Americans experiencing the greatest inequities in our current system, a persistent theme was that the most troubling trends would hit them hardest, and beneficial innovations would likely leave them behind. Addressing persistent, historic, and systemic inequity is not a separate activity, but one that must be integrated into ongoing action across all five themes. Working toward a more equitable system requires that we center the voices of those who have been historically marginalized in our visioning and in our strategies for moving forward.

3. Americans understand the complex interrelationships between the many factors that impact our health and well-being and hope for greater collaboration between sectors. The visions they described and the potential solutions they identified sit at the intersection of many issues that are often addressed separately: economic security, health care, technology, the environment, food security and sustainability, housing, safety, education, community connection, and civic life. The majority of participants indicated that no single sector (government, business, or community organizations) could single-handedly achieve the vision they set forth. Achieving an equitable future for health and well-being will require unprecedented collaboration and stewardship across sectors and siloes.



4. People do not believe that technology will be a salve for all of the challenges that face us. Participants identified areas of life where they thought technology could improve and even save lives. But they also expressed deep concern about the potential for accelerating technologies to replace personal connection, exacerbate inequities, and increase surveillance. In many cases, the visions people described were not ones of technological innovation but of a return to the basics: securing basic needs and creating opportunities for love, community, and connection. Efforts to build a more equitable future should not rely solely or even primarily on technological solutions.



5. Participants expressed a readiness to begin building the futures they have envisioned, and the pathways toward those futures are likely to be held in communities. Many participants shared a desire for solutions that would honor and return to the knowledge and wisdom of our ancestors, particularly but not exclusively Indigenous practices. Communities were motivated and mobilized by engaging in these conversations and were eager to begin building the future they envisioned. They believe that they have an important role to play in building the future they hope to see and cited ways in which their communities were already working toward realizing their vision. Efforts to build toward this future vision must center the voices and solutions of those most proximate to the inequities we face, and this process revealed their enthusiasm and readiness to lead into the future.



Prompting people with potential changes on the horizon did inspire different conversations about the future. Offering people stories of possible futures caused them to consider potential changes and solutions that are not typically at the forefront of such conversations. For example, participants gravitated toward cooperatives and well-being assessments—ideas that are not prevalent in national discourse but were surfaced in [FORESIGHT's futures report](#) and could offer pathways to the visions they identified.

Providing people with stories that explored a wide variety of issues encouraged them to think more broadly about the many factors that impact health and well-being. Rather than limiting or constraining conversations, the stories served as a jumping-off point that allowed space for people to raise thoughtful ideas about what the future might hold. This experience suggests that in order to engage a true diversity of people in conversations about the future, we must design equitable processes that can expand people's imaginations for what is possible and create space for them to share both their fears and their most deeply held hopes and aspirations.

Efforts to explore future trends and their potential impacts very often omit or underrepresent those who are most directly affected by persistent obstacles and inequities. FORESIGHT was driven by a commitment to inclusion that places those who are closest to problems at the center of efforts to solve them, which necessarily includes giving priority to those who are experiencing the greatest inequities. Many who participated identified inclusive conversations as essential to the process of building the visions they articulated.

What's Next

In late 2020, FORESIGHT shared the early findings and vision from this process with a diverse group of more than 100 individuals, including health care workers, industry champions, academics, farmers, nonprofit leaders, community organizers, and residents. This national group—acting in the role of stewards—convened and collaboratively generated more than [60 proposals](#) intended to advance participants' bold vision for the future of health and well-being. In 2021 and beyond, FORESIGHT, in partnership with others, will begin to build the infrastructure for this equitable future.

For more information about getting involved in the future of FORESIGHT, please contact Lindsey Alexander: alexander@rippel.org.

