



Lives and Communities

Shifts in how we live, work and relate

Many factors concerning who we are, how we live and how we work are impacting our lives and communities. Around the world, including in Canada, we are living longer, getting older and concentrating in urban cores. Meanwhile, the Millennial generation—a growing force in economics and politics—is introducing new patterns of work, leisure, consumption and life paths. With these changes come opportunities: flexible work arrangements allow people to live and work from anywhere; greater diversity brings new culture and vibrancy to communities; and new, dynamic business opportunities enable regions to diversify their economies. However, some people may feel left behind, as certain groups—especially those previously denied full participation in social, economic, cultural or political life—struggle with the pace of change and a lack of support. The Basin will face unique challenges in this changing world, along with unique advantages centred around quality of life, natural beauty and relatively affordable housing.

Note: This short research brief was informed by reports prepared for Columbia Basin Trust by [Stratos Inc.](#) This information is free to use in a way that is consistent with the intent of the original papers.

Understanding global trends

SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

Globally, the average age of people is increasing due to longer life expectancies and fewer births. While longer lives indicate success, they also introduce social and economic challenges, such as preserving the health, safety and independence of older people and having a lower percentage of the population contributing to the economy.

Millennials—born between 1981 and 1996—will soon make up the largest generation and are expected to represent 75 per cent of the world's workforce by 2025ⁱ. Shifting demographics will impact political and economic systems as new generations make life choices, use their purchasing power and assert their political preferences.

What the research tells us

- ↳ Currently, people aged 60 and over make up 12 per cent of the global population; by 2050, the United Nations expects that number to rise to 22 per centⁱⁱ.
- ↳ By 2036, seniors are expected to represent 25 per cent of the Canadian populationⁱⁱⁱ.
- ↳ A 2016 report stated that the number of seniors in the Basin was expected to overtake the number of youth by 2019, as youth move away for school and jobs and retirees move here seeking rural lifestyles^{iv}.

FUTURE WORK

Over the past 20 years, non-traditional work—including temporary, part-time and self-employed positions—has accounted for more than half of all jobs created, and now represents about one third of total employment in countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development^v. The digital gig economy—made up of temporary, flexible jobs that rely on the internet—is transforming relationships between employers and employees and reshaping long-standing career paths and safety nets. However, flexible, dynamic careers can also affect household and personal stability since they may not offer items like medical, life and disability insurance; dental coverage; and retirement support.

What the research tells us

- ↳ Gig economy workers, including those who rely on the internet, rose from 10.1 per cent of the American workforce in 2005 to 15.8 per cent in 2015^{vi}.
- ↳ Non-traditional workers make up 20 to 30 per cent of the Canadian workforce^{vii}.
- ↳ In the Basin, co-working spaces are being set up to accommodate a changing work style.

DEMAND FOR JOB SKILLS

Throughout the world, changes in technology, the climate, demographics and social and political factors are affecting the creation and elimination of jobs. There is now a premium on “meta-skills” like flexibility, grit, creativity and problem solving^{viii}. Perhaps unsurprisingly, digital literacy and lifelong learning are becoming new requirements, with technological change transforming occupations across the economy^{ix}. Also, the demand for skills like caregiving, communication and empathy is expected to grow almost as fast as the demand for advanced technological skills^x.

What the research tells us

- ↳ Globally, 54 per cent of employees will require significantly new or upgraded skills by 2022^{xi}.
- ↳ A 2018 review found that health care and social assistance had been Canada's fastest-growing sector for five years^{xii}.
- ↳ BC's 2018 Labour Market Outlook Report revealed a strong demand for communication and people skills^{xiii}.

MOVING TO CITIES

In 2007, the world experienced a significant turning point. Until then, more people lived in rural areas than urban ones. Since then, more people have lived in urban ones. This rapid urbanization—caused both by people moving to cities and by rural environments turning into urban ones—has been a global trend since 1950^{xiv}. This fundamental shift in how we organize ourselves continues to have environmental, social and economic implications.

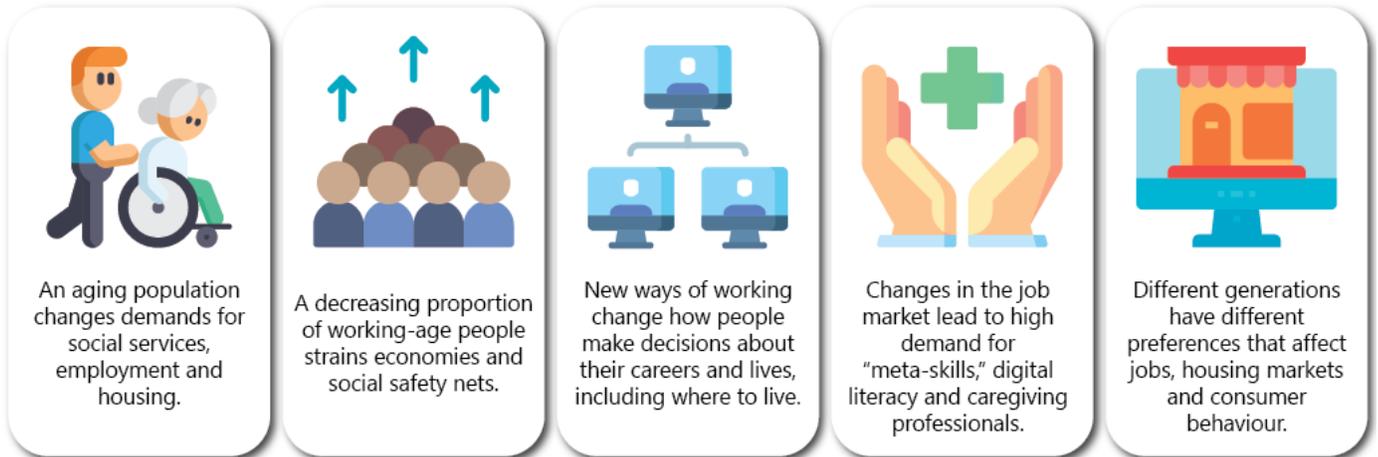
What the research tells us

- ↳ By 2030, it is expected that 84 per cent of Canadians will live in urban areas^{xv}.
- ↳ Employment in rural areas that are located around urban centres is increasing at twice the national average^{xvi}.

What could this mean for the Basin?

Home to small cities, towns and rural areas, the Basin faces challenges and opportunities distinct from other regions that are anchored around large urban cores. Access to nature, a lower cost of living, a desirable lifestyle and strong community bonds are among the qualities that appeal to people in the Basin and attract newcomers. Building on these strengths and understanding their contexts in an aging, changing world is critical in sustaining the region's prosperity.

Here are some of the impacts the Basin may experience in coming years:

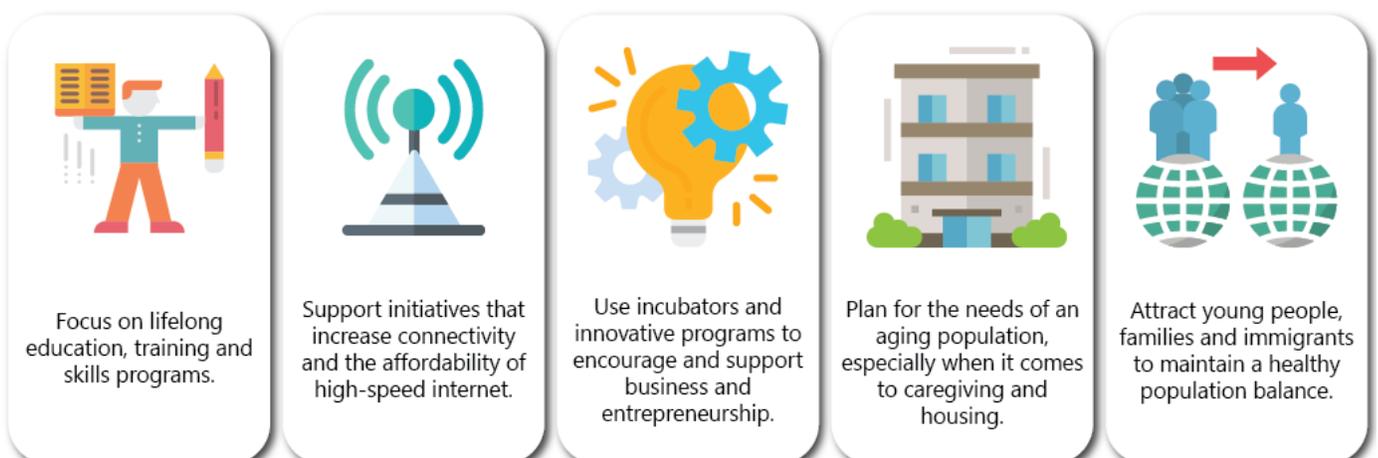


- An aging population changes demands for social services, employment and housing.
- A decreasing proportion of working-age people strains economies and social safety nets.
- New ways of working change how people make decisions about their careers and lives, including where to live.
- Changes in the job market lead to high demand for "meta-skills," digital literacy and caregiving professionals.
- Different generations have different preferences that affect jobs, housing markets and consumer behaviour.

These shifts in how we live and work could reshape the dynamics of our families, communities and economies. Safeguarding and promoting quality of life will be critical when it comes to attracting new residents, taking advantage of opportunities such as a relatively affordable cost of living, and responding to the challenges of an aging population. Smaller communities have the distinct advantage of being nimble and agile, making them more adaptable and better able to change than larger cities, and therefore ideal sites for pilots and trials^{xvii}.

How can the potential impacts be addressed?

There are many ways people and organizations in the Basin can adapt to situations like those mentioned above. Here are a few ideas.



- Focus on lifelong education, training and skills programs.
- Support initiatives that increase connectivity and the affordability of high-speed internet.
- Use incubators and innovative programs to encourage and support business and entrepreneurship.
- Plan for the needs of an aging population, especially when it comes to caregiving and housing.
- Attract young people, families and immigrants to maintain a healthy population balance.

COMMUNITY COMPOSITION

Like in much of Canada, the Basin's population is aging^{xviii}. While Canada's largest demographic is currently Millennials, many youth are moving away from the Basin, largely for education and employment. At the same time, many retirees are moving here in search of rural lifestyles^{xix}. By 2041, the Basin population is expected to grow by 5 per cent (compared to 27 per cent for BC as a whole), all in the 65+ age group^{xx}.

These demographic shifts and evolving lifestyle choices—such as the desire of many seniors to “age at home”—will require a new focus on health and social services. They may also require more deliberate efforts to attract workers to the region to maintain and strengthen the economy. Expectations and desires for quality of life, affordability and professional opportunities will evolve and can differ between generations. To maintain strong and vibrant Basin communities, these differences should be respected, acknowledged and appreciated.

EXPECTATIONS AND PREFERENCES

The expectations, preferences and behaviours of populations are changing and will influence how societies, economies and cultures evolve^{xxi}. Consumer habits are quickly changing as more people purchase goods and services online, disrupting many small businesses and retailers.

Meanwhile, Millennials are placing greater importance on lifestyle, shifting from spending their money on products, homes and cars to experiences^{xxii}. Together, we're moving toward a “sharing” economy, with implications for how we get around (ride sharing and short-term vehicle rentals), live (multi-generational living and co-ownership) and work (co-working spaces).

How expectations, preferences and behaviours change will vary across the country. To adapt, businesses, governments and communities must consider the potential effects on housing stock and affordability, local economies and infrastructure.

LABOUR MARKET AND CAPACITY SHORTAGES

The Basin is seeing a rise in its senior population and a decline in its working-age population, a trend that is expected to continue^{xxiii}. In 2018, job vacancies across the region totalled 2,248, and a 2016 report expected this would grow to 18,000 by 2020 due to retiring workers^{xxiv}. As demands for labour change, the Basin will confront a growing gap between the current workforce's skill sets and the skills required by employers^{xxv}.

Preparing for and meeting the demands of a changing labour market will require coordinated, long-term efforts. This includes investing in current employees (through training programs that expand and improve skill sets) and attracting new residents to the region. For example, Community Futures Central Kootenay is undertaking a three-year pilot project to attract up to 250 immigrants of various skill levels to fill full-time, year-round positions^{xxvi}.

When people make decisions about where to put down roots, the ever-growing cost of urban living may make quality of life even more important, increasing the attractiveness of the Basin. Also, flexible employment arrangements, like working from home, could attract new residents to the region^{xxvii}.

BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The number of new businesses continues to rise in the Basin. However, in 2018 the total number of businesses fell for the first time since 2011. The retail, wholesale, health care and social assistance industries employ the most Basin residents. Jobs in the sales and services industries are the most abundant (with over 700 job openings in 2018), but have the lowest wages (averaging \$15/hour)^{xxviii}.

Facing new rural economic realities will require fresh perspectives and unique approaches. For example, the small, rural community of Bonavista, Newfoundland, invested in tourism and support for entrepreneurship. It's since seen an influx of young professionals attracted by the community's amenities, scenery and affordable housing. In turn, this is leading to a more diversified economy^{xxix}.

Linkages

RELATED TREND PAPERS

- Toward a sustainable economy
- Health and wellness
- The environment
- A globalized world
- New technology



Trends in our lives and communities **influence:**

21st-century health challenges

Aging people may be more likely to suffer from chronic diseases and conditions, putting added pressure on the health care system.

Social determinants of health

Where you live and how you work are social determinants of health; growing urbanization may contribute to health outcomes.

Emerging biological threats

Those most vulnerable, including the elderly, may be most susceptible to the increasing occurrence of biological threats like the seasonal flu.



Trends in our lives and communities are **influenced by:**

Low-carbon economy

The move toward a greener global economy through advances in new energy technologies may impact the future of work and the demands for jobs and skills.

Circular economy

Sustainable consumption and production in the circular economy may lead to changing demands for jobs and skills.

AI and automation

Disruptive technologies like AI and automation are changing the future of work and the demands for jobs and skills.

Connectivity

Increased connectivity allows for more flexible work arrangements, including remote work.



Trends in our lives and communities are **interconnected with:**

Values, polarization and freedoms

Shifting values and associated tensions may affect our communities due to rising intolerance, increase generational gaps and changing patterns of affiliation and community.



Trends in our lives and communities are **counter to:**

Circular economy

A growing population will create greater demand for goods and services, which could lead to more waste.

References

- ⁱ EY. (2017). *The Future of work is changing. You're your workforce be ready?* Available at: [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-the-future-of-work-is-changing-will-your-workforce-be-ready/\\$FILE/ey-the-future-of-work-is-changing-will-your-workforce-be-ready.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-the-future-of-work-is-changing-will-your-workforce-be-ready/$FILE/ey-the-future-of-work-is-changing-will-your-workforce-be-ready.pdf)
- ⁱⁱ United Nations Population Fund. (n.d.). *Ageing*. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/ageing#>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Conference Board of Canada. (2018). *Canada 2030: The Defining Forces Disrupting Business*. Available at: <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=9813>
- ^{iv} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (2016). *Trends Analysis: Demographics*. Available at: http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/TA_Demographics_2016.pdf
- ^v OECD. (2015). *In it Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All*. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/bc9f5d0b-en.pdf?expires=1572920169&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=0E086BDEC74606DC752B120B5174D345>
- ^{vi} NACo. (2017). *The Future of Work: The Rise of the Gig Economy*. Available at: <https://www.naco.org/featured-resources/future-work-rise-gig-economy>
- ^{vii} Randstad. (n.d.). *Workforce 2025: The future of the world of work*. Available at: <http://content.randstad.ca/hubfs/workforce2025/Workforce-2025-Randstad-Part1.pdf>
- ^{viii} OECD and International Labour Office. (2018). *Global Skills, Trends, Training Needs and Lifelong Learning Strategies for the Future of Work*. Available at: http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/g20_global_skills_trends_and_III_oecd-ilo.pdf
- ^{ix} OECD. (2019). *Skills Outlook 2019: Thriving in a Digital World*. Available at: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/df80bc12-en/1/2/2/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/df80bc12-en&mimeType=text/html&csp=53a91137adce4a3a859955ebh548509c&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book>
- ^x McKinsey & Company. (January 2019). *Navigating a World of Distribution*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Innovation/Navigating%20a%20world%20of%20disruption/MGI-Briefing-note-Navigating-a-world-of-disruption-Jan-2019.ashx>
- ^{xi} World Economic Forum. (2018). *The Future of Jobs Report 2018*. Available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2018.pdf
- ^{xii} Statistics Canada. (2019). *Annual review of the labour market, 2018*. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-004-m/75-004-m2019002-eng.htm>
- ^{xiii} British Columbia. (2018). *British Columbia Labour Market Outlook*. Available at: https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/1dce90f9-f2f9-4eca-b9e5-c19de9598f32/BC_Labour_Market_Outlook_2018_English.pdf.aspx
- ^{xiv} United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019). *World Urbanization Prospects 2018*. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2018-Highlights.pdf>
- ^{xv} https://www.jflglobal.com/media/uploads/news/2018-11/Canada_2030_-_Part_2_-_The_Defining_Forces_Disrupting_Business.pdf
- ^{xvi} <https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CanadaNext-FullReport-EN.pdf>
- ^{xvii} <https://ppforum.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/CanadaNext-FullReport-EN.pdf>
- ^{xviii} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute (2016). *Trends Analysis: Demographics*. Available at: http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/TA_Demographics_2016.pdf
- ^{xix} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. (n.d.) *Grey Wave Gains Momentum*. Available at: <http://www.cbrdi.ca/News/GreyWaveGainsMomentum>
- ^{xx} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute and Selkirk College. *2019 State of the Basin: Snapshot Report*. Available at: <http://cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/Documents/PDF/RDI-SOTB-Report-Snapshot-2019.pdf>
- ^{xxi} BlackRock. (2019) *Megatrends: How Demographics and Social Change are Shaping the Future*. Available at: <https://www.blackrock.com/uk/intermediaries/literature/whitepaper/megatrend-en-emea-whitepaper.pdf>
- ^{xxii} The Real Estate Intelligence Network Ltd. *The Millennial Report*. Available at: http://cdn3.reincanada.com/Research/REIN_The_Millennial_Report_DIGITAL.pdf
- ^{xxiii} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. (2016). *Trends Analysis: Demographics*. Available at: http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/TA_Demographics_2016.pdf
- ^{xxiv} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. (2016). *Trends Analysis: Workforce*. Available at: http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/TA_Workforce_2016.pdf
- ^{xxv} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute. (2017). *Rural Workforce Development Strategies*. Available at: http://datacat.cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/RuralWorkforceDevelopmentKnowledgeBriefSpring2017_0.pdf
- ^{xxvi} Community Futures Central Kootenay. (2019) *West Kootenay chosen for rural immigration project*. Available at:

<https://futures.bc.ca/west-kootenay-chosen-for-rural-immigration-project/>

^{xxvii} Policy Horizons Canada. (2016). *Canada 2030: Scan of Emerging Issues – Infrastructure*. Available at: <https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2016/10/01/canada-2030-scan-of-emerging-issues-infrastructure/>

^{xxviii} Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute and Selkirk College. *2019 State of the Basin: Snapshot Report*. Available at: <http://cbrdi.ca/sites/default/files/Documents/PDF/RDI-SOTB-Report-Snapshot-2019.pdf>

^{xxix} Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. (2019). *State of Rural Canada III: Bridging Rural Data Gaps*. Available at: <http://sorc.crrf.ca/sorc3/>