



A Globalized World

New impacts and threats

The greater forces that shape the globe—and global connections—are transforming. The way nations relate to one another appears to be shifting away from the post-World War II era that saw the creation of the United Nations and other alliances between countries. There's a rise in populism—a political approach that promotes the voice of “the people” instead of “the elite” who hold power and whose decisions may be corrupt or self-serving—and shifts away from the dominance of western democracies. Many people around the world trust traditional institutions less and have a growing sense that “the people” are being left behind. News sources and other public spaces where individuals discuss social and political issues are burdened by misinformation and sharply contrasting opinions and beliefs. Meanwhile, economic uncertainty and new biological threats endanger our collective well-being. While historically the Basin has been relatively insulated from many of these impacts, their current magnitude and rate of change makes the future less certain. However, the Basin offers many examples of tackling regional, national and global challenges through individual leadership, community generosity and institutional innovation. Continuing to encourage and support this behaviour will be essential in effectively navigating a changing world.

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

SHIFTS IN INFORMATION AND TRUST

The way we consume information is changing. More and more, people are getting their news from social media and applications like Google News and Apple News, with the news personalized to their individual interests and views. Globally, deliberate misinformation is spreading at an alarming rate, with terms like “fake news” and “post-truth” becoming more common. People have less trust in the mediaⁱ and governmentⁱⁱ.

What the research tells us

- ↳ More than 50 per cent of people are concerned about their abilities to separate what’s real and what’s fake on the internetⁱⁱⁱ.
- ↳ Fifty-two per cent of Canadians get their news from Twitter, Facebook or Instagram; less than one third think it’s accurate^{iv}.

EMERGING BIOLOGICAL THREATS

The human and economic costs of infectious diseases is hard to overstate. In recent years, threats like Ebola, SARS, Zika and the seasonal flu have made regular appearances in newspaper headlines. Globally, the frequency of disease outbreaks is on the rise, driven by surging levels of travel, urbanization, deforestation, climate change and human displacement^v. At the same time, our vulnerability to these risks is increasing as we misuse antibiotics and put less faith in vaccines^{vi}.

What the research tells us

- ↳ In June 2018, for the first time since its inception, there were outbreaks of six of the eight categories of diseases in the World Health Organization’s priority disease list^{vii}.
- ↳ In Canada, measles outbreaks have risen in recent years, with many cases in BC; countries like the United Kingdom and United States are at risk of no longer being considered free of the disease^{viii}.
- ↳ In 2019, 23 per cent of BC residents expressed doubts about vaccinations; 9 per cent could be called “true anti-vaxxers.”^{ix}

VALUES, POLARIZATION AND FREEDOMS

Our values reflect what’s important to us; they’re the judgments we hold personally and collectively that form the foundation of our decisions. Globally, values are shifting and creating tensions, affecting politics and the economy. These tensions show up in different ways around the world, but include issues around

multiculturalism, human rights, international alliances and trade, the role of the state and the protection of our collective environment, such as the oceans and atmosphere^x. Global changes also include a rise in populism, decrease of freedoms for individuals and the press, and growing discontent for the way things are currently done^{xi}. In many nations, rapid social and economic change is increasing the gaps in values between generations and the traditional patterns of affiliation and community^{xii}.

What the research tells us

- ↳ There have been global declines in political rights and civil liberties for 13 consecutive years, from 2005 to 2018^{xiii}.
- ↳ In 2019, 61 per cent of Canadians agreed that “traditional parties don’t care about people like them,” up from 56 per cent in 2016^{xiv}.

INCREASING ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

There is increasing uncertainty around the health of the global economy: financial markets may change rapidly and unpredictably; the rate of global economic growth has peaked; and shifting norms are leading to instability between countries and trade tensions^{xv}. The debt of households, businesses and governments continues to rise, further stressing global systems^{xvi}. In 2019, Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz warned that household debt levels in Canada represent one of the biggest vulnerabilities to the nation’s economy.

What the research tells us

- ↳ Global debt reached \$169 trillion in 2017, a 74 per cent increase from 2007^{xvii}.
- ↳ The Bank of Canada warns that the country’s gross domestic product (the dollar value of all finished goods and services made within Canada) could shrink 4.5 per cent by 2021 if global uncertainty worsens^{xviii}.
- ↳ The average BC family has debt levels that are 210 per cent of their after-tax incomes^{xix}.

What could this mean for the Basin?

Given the uncertainty and global nature of these impacts and threats, attempting to predict how they may affect the Basin is challenging. Historically, the region has been somewhat insulated from many of these forces; compared to people in cities, people in rural areas have been more isolated from the impacts and implications of major political and economic shifts. However, the past can't always predict the future. The Basin is still very much part of and subject to the trends of the wider world. Shifts in the economy, exposure to misinformation and sharply contrasting political opinions and beliefs, among others, pose risks that must be considered.

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



Spreading misinformation is one of the reasons people engage with and trust their governments and other institutions less.

People are exposed to global trends in thoughts and beliefs - like polarization (sharply contrasting opinions) - making communities more inclusive.

Economic downturns, trade disputes and other economic shocks harm the region's well-being.

Increased rates of infectious diseases impact human health and add pressure to local services.

These challenges and more may impact community well-being and the bonds between people in the region. Addressing these issues will require a continued focus on the strengths of the region's people and institutions, demonstrated by the many examples of individual leadership, community generosity and institutional innovation. To ensure continued prosperity, the region must recognize, support and continue to encourage and empower these behaviours.

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.



Help create inclusive communities by supporting minority and marginalized groups.

Help communities bounce back from and adapt to unexpected shocks.

Help people use technology responsibly, especially youth.

Help governments, industries and non-profits create partnerships and share resources.

Help residents work toward the continued prosperity of the region.

VALUES, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

Democracies around the world are facing challenges as they experience changes in social, cultural and ideological values. Canada is not immune from these global issues and has many of its own concerns, including the alienation of the western provinces and the cultural and legal debates in Quebec on religious freedom and secularism (the separation of government institutions from religious influences).

Assessing these trends can be challenging. However, one way to evaluate impacts is the “equity and inclusion index.” This measures perceptions on whether some groups keep to themselves in communities or get “left out,” and the level of disagreement between people in communities^{xx}. In 2016, a Basin survey revealed an index of 3.5 out of 7, indicating that residents believe the region has lower levels of equity and inclusion across the region.

To create welcoming and inclusive communities, residents must be encouraged to fully participate in all aspects of life. This includes being open to new ideas and customs, supporting diversity and respecting differences in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities and beliefs^{xxi}. In the Basin, efforts are being made to support newcomers. For example, the Friends of Refugees Society is a network of volunteer-run, charitable organizations that offer recreational therapy and secure housing for refugees^{xxii-xxiii}.

EVOLVING CIVIC PARTICIPATION

There are several factors that help shape how people choose to participate in their communities, democracies and societies. The rise of online news, closing of local news outlets and curated feeds and social media are transforming how people receive information. In addition, people are losing trust in the private sector (especially companies that use personal information in ways users aren’t always aware of) and in public institutions (especially when they aren’t transparent or don’t engage with the public enough).

Voter turnout in the Basin—an indicator of how engaged people are with their governments—is generally higher than the provincial average^{xxiv}. Turnout is generally lower among younger people, those with lower levels of formal education and lower wage earners. Columbia Basin Trust’s Basin Youth

Network is an example of an initiative that recognizes the importance of the youth voice and helps young people become active community members and leaders^{xxv}.

In addition to voting, there are new and innovative ways that people can share how they expect their governments and other influential organizations to perform in their communities. Some examples include:

- ↳ community-based data collection: for example, watershed monitoring can help inform local decisions about how water is used
- ↳ shared governance models: for example, a person with lived experience provides input to help a community service agency serve its audience better.

As organizations and governments move toward models of open data and open processes, people can be engaged and empowered in new, non-traditional ways^{xxvi}.

PLANNING IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Our world is more connected than ever. Although globalization has brought many benefits, it has also brought new risks and uncertainties to our well-being. The free movement of people allows for tourism and travel, but also possible pandemics. Trade agreements increase our productivity and quality of life, but also bring trade disputes and increased risk of global financial crises.

Resilient societies are able to absorb these shocks; they anticipate risks, find ways to limit the impacts and recover rapidly^{xxvii}. In Canada, this resilience often involves multiple levels of government and broad partnerships to coordinate efforts and pool resources. For example, one of the most effective ways to have more Canadians included in society and cooperating with one another is to take federal and provincial funding and deliver it locally in flexible ways. In addition, nimbler planning approaches are gaining momentum: these anticipate scenarios, allow for adaptation and experimentation, and enable those in charge to respond to change and adjust management tactics as new knowledge comes in. For example, some Basin forestry industry representatives recognized the impacts of global forces on their businesses and are acknowledging the need to work with governments and manage themselves with future realities in mind^{xxviii}.

Linkages

RELATED TREND PAPERS

- Lives and communities
- Health and wellness
- Toward a sustainable economy
- New technology
- The environment



Trends in a globalized world **influence**:

Future work

Economic uncertainty can influence the future of work, both the jobs available and the skills necessary.

Social determinants of health

Economic uncertainty may influence household income as changes in values lead to renewed social tensions, impacting health.

Connectivity

Data breaches and associated leaks of information may influence values, increase polarization and affect freedoms.



Trends in a globalized world are **influenced by**:

Increases in extreme weather

Climate change and extreme weather can worsen or increase the prevalence of certain biological threats.

Connectivity

Access to high-speed, broadband internet enables easier information sharing, plus the sharing of misinformation.

Big, open data

The proliferation of data can be used to maximize the effectiveness of campaigns that target voters based on their preferences and actions.

Moving to cities

Increasing urbanization affects the frequency of disease outbreaks and shifts established values and norms.

Ecosystems at risk

Melting ice and permafrost due to climate change has the potential to release dormant bacteria and viruses that have been trapped for centuries.



Trends in a globalized world are **interconnected with**:

21st-century health challenges

Emerging biological threats leave populations more vulnerable to disease and health challenges associated with the 21st century.

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