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TIONS** **2024** Report
on the **Horizon**



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PDF: PH4-198/2024E-PDF
ISBN: 978-0-660-71025-9

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Foreword

In recent years, the world has experienced significant disruptions—the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas conflict, extreme climate disasters, the surging cost of living, and global supply chain interruptions.

Predicting the next big upheaval may not be possible, but it is crucial to explore possible disruptions and anticipate potential future scenarios. Even seemingly distant or improbable events and circumstances can suddenly become reality, while overlapping disruptions can lead to compounded societal impacts.

Policy Horizons Canada (Policy Horizons) is committed to supporting the Government of Canada’s decision makers in navigating these uncertainties. We identify and explore potential disruptions to enable the creation of robust and resilient policies. Our disruptions on the horizon work is a key part of our mission.

We hope you find this report insightful and thought-provoking. On behalf of Policy Horizons, I would like to thank the people who generously shared their time, knowledge, and thoughts with us.

Kristel Van der Elst
Director General, Policy Horizons Canada

Introduction

Today, the world faces multiple complex crises that can contribute to unexpected disruptions. The *Disruptions on the Horizon* report stems from a critical question many decision makers grapple with: what disruptions should we anticipate next?

The *Disruptions on the Horizon 2024* report identifies and assesses 35 disruptions for which Canada may need to prepare and explores some of the interconnections between them. These disruptions are potential events and circumstances that could affect our society and the way it functions, as well as the way people live, work, and connect. Their impacts can be perceived as positive or negative, depending on one's perspective.

While the disruptions presented in this report are not guaranteed to occur, they are plausible. Neglecting to consider them may lead to policy failure and missed opportunities. Thinking through possible disruptions when developing policies, programs, and strategies could help seize opportunities, navigate impacts, and minimize risks.

Reflection guide

Leaders, policy makers, and decision makers can benefit from thinking through possible disruptions on the horizon when developing policies, programs, and strategies. These disruptions might create challenges or opportunities. Some can be avoided, or their impacts minimized, while others require adaptation.

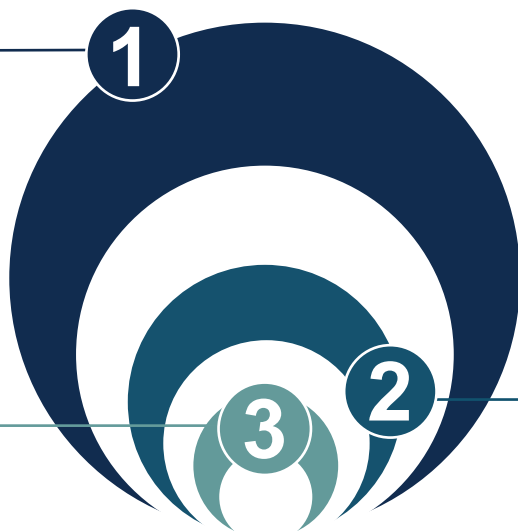
The following questions can help explore, assess, and prepare for disruptions on the horizon.

EXPLORE the disruptions

- Are the key disruptions on your radar?
- What assumptions do you hold about these disruptions?
- Which disruptions worry you most?
- Which disruptions are most important to prevent?
- What new realities might emerge if multiple disruptions occur at the same time?

ASSESS the disruptions

- What do the disruptions mean for your department, domain, or policies?
- Which challenges and opportunities do these disruptions represent for your strategic and/or operational context?
- Do we have sufficient insight into the impact of these disruptions? What do we need to know?
- Which of the disruptions should you anticipate?
- Which disruptions fall into your area of responsibility and which ones might indirectly affect your area of responsibility?
- Are you incorporating the relevant disruptions into your work?



PREPARE for the disruptions

- What should you do to make sure that your current policies, programs, and strategies are robust in the face of the disruptions and their impacts?
- Which of the disruptions are you able to help prevent or respond to?
- For disruptions you can help prevent, are there existing policies, programs, and strategies? What vulnerabilities exist?
- For disruptions to which you aim to respond and/or adapt, are the policies, programs, and strategies robust? If not, what would make them robust?
- Who should prepare for each disruption? Which stakeholders are prepared?

Approach

Policy Horizons identified and assessed 35 possible disruptions that could significantly affect Canadian society and beyond.

The disruptions were derived from a literature review, expert interviews, conversations with policy makers, workshops with foresight practitioners, as well as an analysis of what is changing in our society, what is driving that change, and what new realities could emerge.

While the list is not comprehensive, the 35 disruptions outlined in this report are plausible events and circumstances that could occur in the coming years. They are categorized into five domains: society, economy, environment, politics/geopolitics, and health—but their origins and impacts could span across more than one domain. Each disruption is written in present tense as a future scenario in which a disruption has become reality.

To assess these disruptions, Policy Horizons gathered and analyzed input from around 500 stakeholders, colleagues, and foresight experts across the Government of Canada and beyond. They provided their insights through a survey, where they assessed the following aspects of each disruption:

1 **Likelihood and impact**—how likely it is to occur and how much impact it could have, if it were to occur;

2 **Time horizon**—when it could occur;

And for a subset of disruptions:

3 **Interconnections**—if one disruption were to occur, which related disruptions would be more likely to occur.





Society



Health



Politics/Geopolitics



Economy



Environment

Survey results

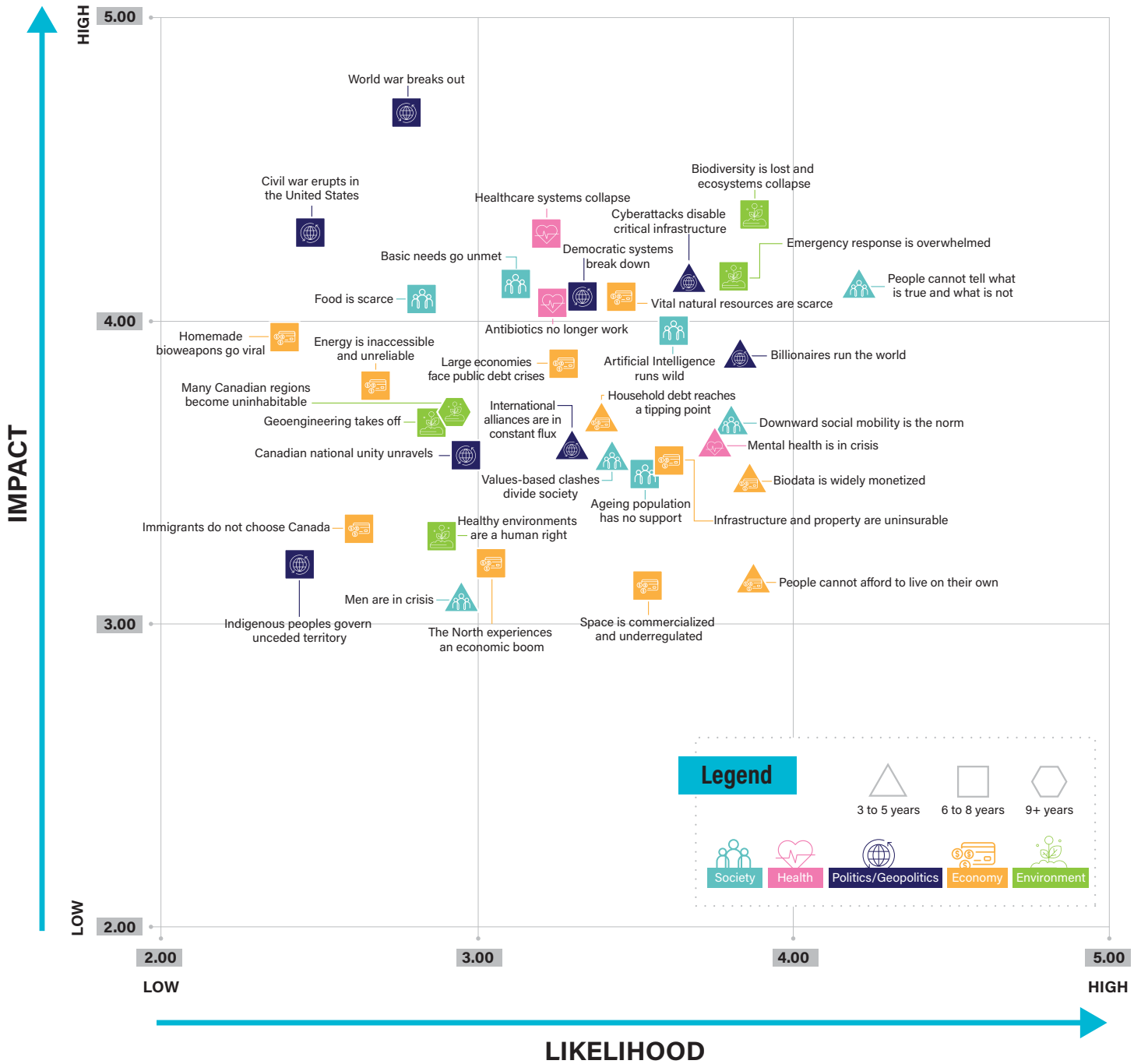
This section presents survey results on the disruptions' likelihood, impact, and time horizon.

Figure 1 shows all 35 disruptions depicted along three dimensions: likelihood, impact, and time horizon. It displays the average result for each dimension, according to survey respondents, as follows:

- Likelihood (how likely the disruption is to occur) is on the x-axis, and impact (how much impact the disruption could have) is on the y-axis. Respondents assessed both likelihood and impact on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high; both axes in figure 1 start at 2, as all disruptions scored an average above that threshold.
- Time horizon (when the disruption could occur) is represented by the shape of the icons and is divided into time segments of 3-5 years (triangle), 6-8 years (square), and 9+ years (hexagon). Respondents could select from a 1 to 10+ year timeline but none of the disruptions were expected to occur in the coming two years, or ten or more.

DISRUPTIONS MAP

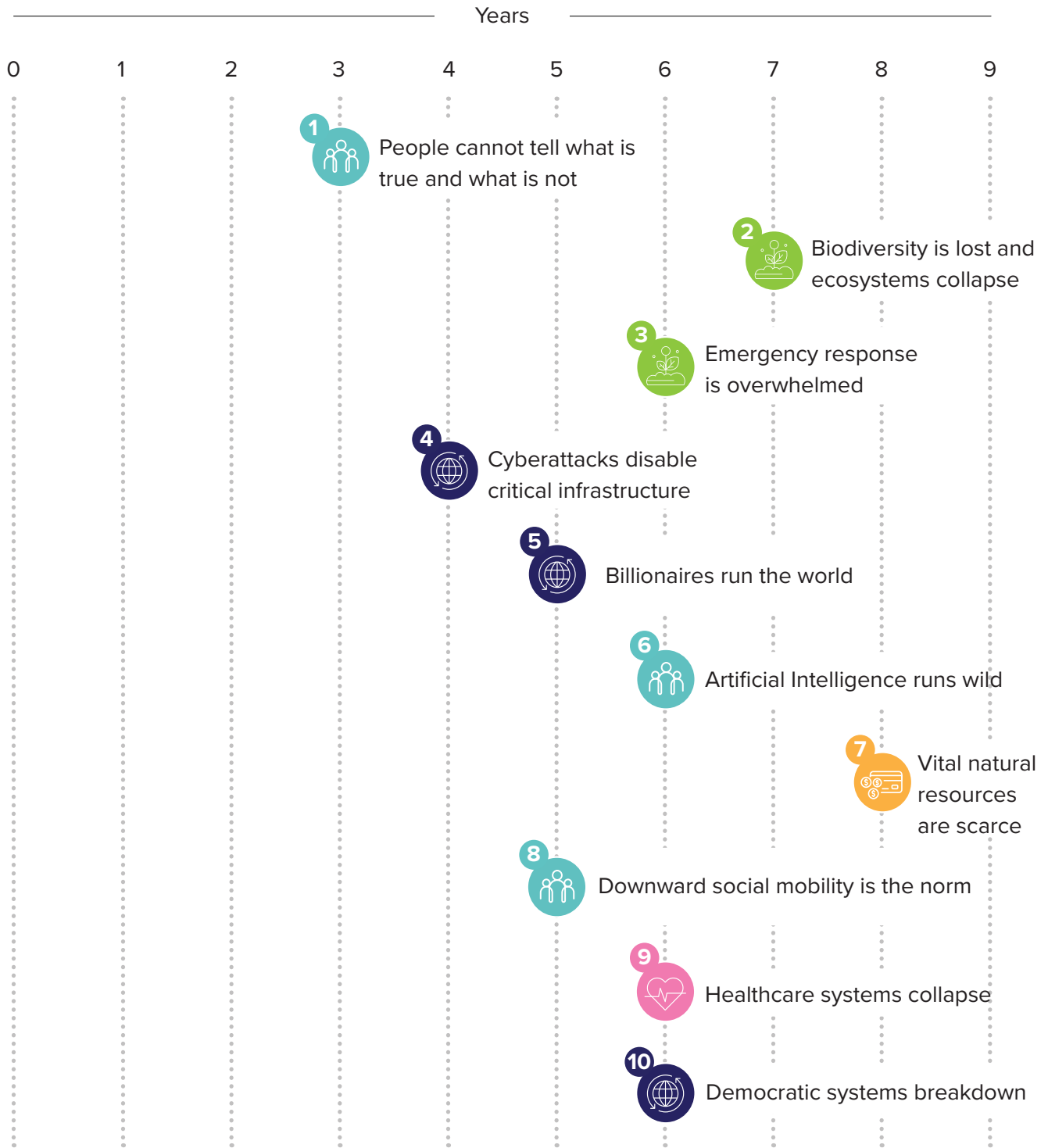
Figure 1



TOP 10 DISRUPTIONS

Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the top 10 disruptions, those that have the highest combined likelihood and impact. They are mapped on a timeline according to when the disruption could occur.



TOP 10 DISRUPTIONS BY LIKELIHOOD AND IMPACT

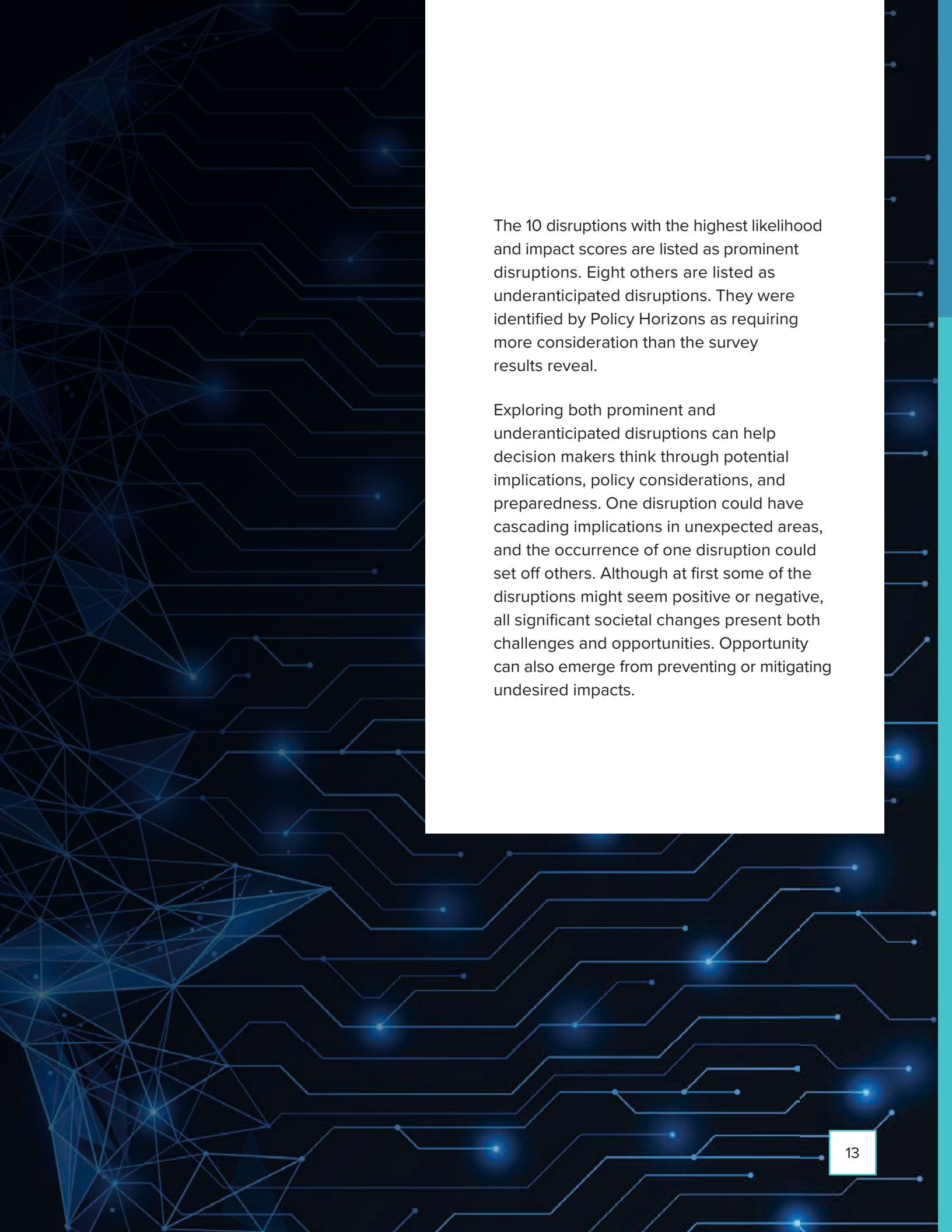
Figure 3

Figure 3 shows two top 10 lists: the top 10 disruptions based on likelihood, and the top 10 disruptions based on impact, according to the survey responses.



Reflections on key disruptions

- This section further explores **18 disruptions** that could have significant impact for Canada.



The 10 disruptions with the highest likelihood and impact scores are listed as prominent disruptions. Eight others are listed as underanticipated disruptions. They were identified by Policy Horizons as requiring more consideration than the survey results reveal.

Exploring both prominent and underanticipated disruptions can help decision makers think through potential implications, policy considerations, and preparedness. One disruption could have cascading implications in unexpected areas, and the occurrence of one disruption could set off others. Although at first some of the disruptions might seem positive or negative, all significant societal changes present both challenges and opportunities. Opportunity can also emerge from preventing or mitigating undesired impacts.

Prominent disruptions

Below are the top 10 disruptions for which decision makers may need to prepare, based on the survey results. They are listed from highest to lowest score.

The possible implications and considerations for policy making are not comprehensive. They are meant to provoke further reflection on what the disruptions could mean for Canadian society and beyond.



People cannot tell what is true and what is not

The information ecosystem is flooded with human- and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated content. Mis- and disinformation make it almost impossible to know what is fake or real. It is much harder to know what or who to trust.

More powerful generative AI tools, declining trust in traditional knowledge sources, and algorithms designed for emotional engagement rather than factual reporting could increase distrust and social fragmentation. More people may live in separate realities shaped by their personalized media and information ecosystems. These realities could become hotbeds of disinformation, be characterized by incompatible and competing narratives, and form the basis of fault lines in society. Research and the creation of scientific evidence could become increasingly difficult. Public decision making could be compromised as institutions struggle to effectively communicate key messaging on education, public health, research, and government information.



Biodiversity is lost and ecosystems collapse

There is an irreversible loss of biodiversity and a collapse of ecosystems due to habitat destruction, overexploitation, pollution, and climate change.

Ecosystems and the wide range of animals, plants, and microorganisms within them keep the natural world in balance. Ecosystem collapse and the loss of biodiversity could have cascading impacts on all living things, putting basic human needs such as clean air, water, and food in jeopardy. Health and wellbeing could severely suffer as malnutrition, disease, and other health problems become more prevalent, leading to increased mortality rates, healthcare system collapse, and overall reduced quality of life. Key industries like farming, fishing, and logging could be hard hit, leading to major economic losses and instability. Society could become fragile as many people may be unable to meet their basic needs, let alone higher-order needs like a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. With a heightened sense of insecurity over a lifetime, conflicts could become violent, and people could become more vulnerable to authoritarian and anti-establishment groups or leaders.



Emergency response is overwhelmed

Extreme weather events such as fires, floods, tornados, and hurricanes are frequent and severe. The world is in a perpetual state of emergency, and unable to respond adequately and sustainably.

As climate change increases the frequency and severity of natural disasters, even previously unaffected areas could be impacted. Emergency responses may be unable to keep pace. The human impact of constant co-occurring disasters in Canada could be severe, with recurring loss of life and widespread destruction of infrastructure, property, and businesses. Millions of people may be displaced as weather conditions become intolerable and entire regions become uninsurable, preventing people from getting mortgages. The stress and trauma of these displacements, in addition to economic losses from collapsing real estate markets, could contribute to a worsening mental health crisis. Extreme weather events could also result in regular shocks to trade, volatile price of goods, and increased travel restrictions. Meanwhile, an already fragile healthcare system may crumble under surging demand. Internationally, cooperation may decline as many countries turn inwards to respond to their own emergencies. Alternatively, nations may choose to pool resources and collaborate globally in the face of a common threat.



Cyberattacks disable critical infrastructure

Interruptions to essential services such as the Internet, electricity, transportation, water, and food supply systems are common due to regular cyberattacks, disrupting everyday life.

Technology is an increasingly fundamental element in Canada's critical infrastructure. Moving forward, cyberattacks could have a significant impact on societies' ability to provide essential goods and services, including key operations and services delivered by governments. Frequent disruptions of digital services due to cyber threats could renew demand for in-person services, and lower trust in services, technology, or government policy. Public sentiment could further shift against technology and digital services as more complex systems (such as AI) are implemented but may be poorly understood or distrusted by users. The global competition for technological dominance may add further complexity, as geopolitics, technology, and economics converge.



Billionaires run the world

Extremely wealthy people use their platforms, firms, foundations, and investments to shape public policy—imposing their individual values and beliefs and bypassing democratic governance principles.

As the extremely wealthy increasingly influence public opinion and public policy to secure their own interests, the future of democracy and global governance could be at risk. More billionaires could leverage their control over strategic technologies and enormous wealth concentration to enter arenas formerly reserved for states, such as space exploration and diplomacy. As their power grows, billionaires could gain warfare capabilities and control over natural resources and strategic assets. Some might co-opt national foreign policy or take unilateral diplomatic or military action, destabilizing international relations. This may introduce new uncertainties for governance structures, as private individuals do not have the same decision-making constraints as diplomats, politicians, and military professionals.



Artificial Intelligence runs wild

AI develops rapidly and its usage becomes pervasive. Society cannot keep up, and people do not widely understand where and how it is being used.

Market and geopolitical competition could drive rapid AI development while potentially incentivizing risky corner-cutting behavior and lack of transparency. This rapid development and spread of AI could outpace regulatory efforts to prevent its misuse, leading to many unforeseen challenges. The data used to train generative AI models may infringe on privacy and intellectual property rights, with information collected, stored, and used without adequate regulatory frameworks. Existing inequalities may amplify as AI perpetuates biases in its training data. Social cohesion may erode as a flood of undetectable AI-generated content manipulates and divides populations, fueling values-based clashes. Access to essential services may also become uncertain as AI exploits vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, putting many basic needs at risk. As an energy- and water-intensive technology, AI could also put pressure on supplies of vital resources, while accelerating climate change.



Vital natural resources are scarce

The demand for vital natural resources such as water, sand, and critical minerals outpaces supply. Access to resources is either limited by a dwindling finite supply or controlled by a few suppliers.

Continued population growth, climate change, extreme weather events, and conflict outbreaks may further limit resource availability. Water scarcity, food insecurity, and energy shortages could become extensive, making basic needs harder to secure, and leading to cascading impacts on human health and social stability. The strategic and economic importance of these resources could drive geopolitical conflicts, as countries compete for access and control of an increasingly limited and valuable supply. Prices of resources could become volatile, and economies unstable as once-abundant vital resources become scarce. In addition, dependence on historically important resources like oil may decline while other resources like critical minerals become key inputs in emerging technologies and markets. This competition and instability could devolve into armed conflict, driving nations into war over resources. Furthermore, overexploitation of resources could cause environmental degradation, diminishing biodiversity and ecosystems, and worsening climate change impacts.



Downward social mobility is the norm

People cannot enter the housing market and face increasingly insecure work arrangements. Many Canadians find themselves in lower socioeconomic conditions than their parents.

With housing becoming increasingly unaffordable and work arrangements more precarious, socioeconomic conditions for Canadians could decline from one generation to the next. People may lose trust in governments' ability to help them achieve social mobility, especially when it comes to key factors such as housing, education, and the cost of living. Those facing multiple barriers may be even more disadvantaged and have difficulty accessing services. As people lose hope in improving their lives, mental health challenges and associated economic and social stresses may increase. Meanwhile, as the extremely wealthy continue to accumulate a larger share of the wealth, resentment may deepen until calls for greater wealth redistribution reach a critical point.



Healthcare systems collapse

The healthcare system breaks down and cannot respond to the daily needs of Canadians, much less to crises.

The healthcare system could deteriorate to the point of collapse, becoming unable to meet the daily needs of Canadians, let alone respond to emerging crises. Existing pressures such as an aging population, increased rates of degenerative disease, labour shortages, and limited funding capacity may be straining the future of Canada's healthcare system. New compounding risks such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), biological threats, and augmented humans could further push the system beyond the brink. Climate change and environmental pressures may also lead to a range of global health risks and emergencies. Canada's health system may enter a constant state of crisis, emergency response, and recovery. If Canadians cannot count on reliable access to effective healthcare, there may be increased mortality rates, distrust in fundamental government services, damage to Canada's global reputation, impacts to immigration, and social upheaval.



Democratic systems break down

Authoritarian regimes vastly outnumber democracies and the struggle between the two ideologies is messy in many countries. Some authoritarian countries experience regular pro-democracy protests, while in many democratic countries, duly elected officials pass legislation that dismantles key democratic institutions.

Democracy is showing signs of decline around the world. Even countries with a long history of democratic values and systems are facing challenges to their democratic institutions. Preserving democratic systems could become even more challenging as the basis for values-based divisions in society broadens. For example, innovation in human augmentation and biodigital intervention in natural ecosystems might create insurmountable fragmentation along ideological lines. In addition, extremely wealthy individuals could continue to enter the realms of public policy, using their wealth and influence to impose their individual values, beliefs, and projects on society at large. As society fragments into distinct groups, each with its own perception of the world, it could become impossible to build national consensus and design policies, programs, and messages that serve the population.

Underanticipated disruptions

While it is important to understand the top-ranking disruptions, it may be useful to pay attention to underanticipated disruptions.

It is possible to discount or downplay the potential magnitude of disruptions for many reasons. In an ever-changing world, the full extent of a disruption across society might be different from what is expected based on historic understanding. Further, high-impact disruptions are sometimes perceived to be low-probability because they are too difficult to imagine or prepare for.

Policy Horizons' foresight analysis identified eight disruptions that decision makers may need to consider more thoroughly than the survey results indicate. They are listed below in alphabetical order.



Antibiotics no longer work

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has reached critical levels. AMR is the leading cause of death globally, and food systems are disrupted as it is more expensive for producers to ensure animal or plant health.



Basic needs go unmet

Mounting environmental crises, weak economic growth, and unstable global and local value chains make it difficult for people in Canada to meet their basic human needs, such as housing, water, food, energy, healthcare, and financial security.



Biodata is widely monetized

Business models rely on collecting individuals' biological data, including fingerprints, iris scans, facial images, health information, and DNA. The data is traded or sold, and used for profiling, marketing, and targeted data collection.



Civil war erupts in the United States

U.S. ideological divisions, democratic erosion, and domestic unrest escalate, plunging the country into civil war.



Immigrants do not choose Canada

Canada loses the global competition for highly skilled and upwardly mobile immigrants. Amid affordability problems, housing shortages, and a lack of healthcare, Canada ceases to be a sought-after destination.



Indigenous peoples govern unceded territory

Indigenous peoples are formally involved in the governance of unceded territories across Canada, including in densely populated areas.



Infrastructure and property are uninsurable

The impacts and frequency of climate-related disasters cause underwriters to increase rates and impose strict conditions in certain areas, preventing people from insuring their properties and getting mortgages. Entire areas are no longer serviced by the insurance industry.



World war breaks out

Tensions between the world's powers escalate as new rivalries, alliances, and blocs emerge. Diminishing trust, the assertion of values, acts of interference, the battle for technological superiority, and the fight over natural resources and supply chains propel great powers into a world war, forcing other countries to pick sides.

Exploring interconnections

A disruption could affect multiple systems or areas, sometimes in **unexpected ways** and with **unanticipated speed**.

Exploring interconnections between disruptions and their wider societal impact can help identify potential surprises, understand spillover effects, and anticipate perfect storms.

Insight into interconnections between disruptions might also inform solutions or mitigation strategies. It can help target root causes or deploy interventions that cause positive chain reactions across a range of possible disruptive events and circumstances. It can also help identify who should collaborate to enable the desired results.

The example below shows how disruptions may be linked to one another. In the survey, respondents assessed seven pre-selected disruptions and imagined if one of them occurred, which other two related disruptions may be more likely to occur. Although the interconnections in Figure 4 do not imply a cause-and-effect relationship, they demonstrate a scenario where certain underanticipated disruptions may be more likely to occur.

INTERCONNECTED DISRUPTIONS

Figure 4

Figure 4 shows the connections between selected disruptions. The pink disruptions ranked highest in combined likelihood and impact. The yellow disruptions ranked lower but are strongly linked to the high impact and likelihood disruptions.



Identifying connections between prominent disruptions

The six pink disruptions were seen as highly likely and would have major impact if they occurred. Given that they are also highly interconnected, the probability of these occurring is even greater, and their combined impact on our society could be extremely significant. These six closely interconnected disruptions could create feedback loops resulting in a perfect storm. Beyond increased likelihood, impact, and mutually assured occurrence of each disruption, feedback loops can also speed up disruptions.

In this example, the survey results indicate that society might be approaching a deeply reshaped world in which AI runs wild, cyberattacks disable critical infrastructure, people cannot tell what is true and what is not, democratic systems breakdown, emergency response is overwhelmed, and billionaires run the world.

Examining spillover effects to underestimated disruptions

The three yellow disruptions were seen as highly interconnected to the pink ones. They might be more likely to occur than their individual assessments indicate. If one or more of the highly likely pink disruptions occurred, the spillover effects would increase the likelihood of the connected yellow disruptions occurring.

It may therefore be more likely than expected that basic needs go unmet, values-based clashes divide society, and Canadian national unity unravels, as they become part of the perfect storm of interlinked disruptions.

These three underestimated disruptions may need more proactive attention than the survey results suggest. Their impacts could be widespread, and they could create unanticipated circumstances sooner than expected.



2024
DISRUPTIONS
on the horizon



- Below is the list of **35 potential disruptions** assessed in the 2024 survey.

They appear in alphabetical order by domain:

society, economy, environment, health, and politics/geopolitics.



Society

Ageing population has no support

Living circumstances for many elderly people become unbearable as the population ages, and labour and market conditions worsen.

Artificial Intelligence runs wild

AI develops rapidly and its usage becomes pervasive. Society cannot keep up, and people do not widely understand where and how it is being used.

Basic needs go unmet

Mounting environmental crises, weak economic growth, and unstable global and local value chains make it difficult for people in Canada to meet their basic human needs, such as housing, water, food, energy, healthcare, and financial security.

Downward social mobility is the norm

People cannot enter the housing market and face increasingly insecure work arrangements. Many Canadians find themselves in lower socio-economic conditions than their parents.



Food is scarce

A large segment of the Canadian population faces food insecurity as population growth, unpredictable crop yields, disrupted trade, and agricultural monopolies lead to volatile availability and increased food pricing.

Men are in crisis

Boys and men face unprecedented levels of educational dropout, unemployment, and loneliness as traditional gender roles are challenged.

People cannot tell what is true and what is not

The information ecosystem is flooded with human- and AI-generated content. Mis/disinformation make it almost impossible to know what is fake or real. It is much harder to know what or who to trust.

Values-based clashes divide society

Canada is divided by unsurmountable conflicts over values, identity, and culture. Clashes, at times violent, erupt regularly on issues such as immigration, climate change, Indigenous rights, and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.



Economy

Biodata is widely monetized

Business models rely on collecting individuals' biological data, including fingerprints, iris scans, facial images, health information, and DNA. The data is traded or sold, and used for profiling, marketing, and targeted data collection.

Energy is inaccessible and unreliable

The transition from fossil fuels to renewables is more geopolitically complex than anticipated, leading to uneven adoption around the globe. Many people in Canada face energy uncertainty in terms of availability, reliability, and cost.

Homemade bioweapons go viral

A trend emerges whereby individuals can easily create cheap but powerful bioweapons with readily available technology and minimal infrastructure.

Household debt reaches a tipping point

Unsustainable levels of spending and debt combined with high interest rates drastically limit people's ability to spend, lease, or borrow. People file for bankruptcy, sell their assets, and exit the home ownership market.

Immigrants do not choose Canada

Canada loses the global competition for highly skilled and upwardly mobile immigrants. Amid affordability problems, housing shortages, and a lack of healthcare, Canada ceases to be a sought-after destination.

Infrastructure and property are uninsurable

The impacts and frequency of climate-related disasters cause underwriters to increase rates and impose strict conditions in certain areas, preventing people from insuring their properties and getting mortgages. Entire areas are no longer serviced by the insurance industry.

Large economies face public debt crises

Large economies default on their loans and pull back on their international commitments and spending in healthcare, education, and other public services.

People cannot afford to live on their own

Canadians commonly live with extended family, other families, or many other people, as the housing crisis persists and multigenerational living is more widely accepted.

Space is commercialized and underregulated

The rapid expansion of space activity increases the number of state and private actors, while geopolitical competition blocks the development of a comprehensive legislative framework for regulating economic, scientific, and military activity in space.

The North experiences an economic boom

Climate change opens the Arctic trade routes and economic activity expands in Canada's Northern territories.

Vital natural resources are scarce

The demand for vital natural resources such as water, sand, and critical minerals outpaces supply. Access to resources is either limited by a dwindling finite supply or controlled by a few suppliers.





Environment

Biodiversity is lost and ecosystems collapse

There is an irreversible loss of biodiversity and a collapse of ecosystems due to habitat destruction, overexploitation, pollution, and climate change.

Emergency response is overwhelmed

Extreme weather events such as fires, floods, tornados, and hurricanes are frequent and severe. The world is in a perpetual state of emergency, and unable to respond adequately and sustainably.

Geoengineering takes off

Technologies designed to reduce the Earth's temperature and the effects of climate change, such as carbon removal and solar geoengineering (reflecting sunlight away from the Earth) are widely deployed.

Healthy environments are a human right

People assert their right to live in a healthy environment and hold institutions accountable.

Many Canadian regions become uninhabitable

Many Canadians relocate due to worsening climate change impacts, as extreme weather conditions such as wildfires, flooding, low air quality, and intolerable heat become the norm.



Health

Antibiotics no longer work

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has reached critical levels. AMR is the leading cause of death globally, and food systems are disrupted as it is more expensive for producers to ensure animal or plant health.

Healthcare systems collapse

The healthcare system breaks down and cannot respond to the daily needs of Canadians, much less to crises.

Mental health is in crisis

Mental health deteriorates to crisis levels as Canadians grapple with multiple crises like those related to climate change and the cost of living. Meanwhile, people feel increasingly isolated from one another as societal divisions exacerbate loneliness.





Politics/Geopolitics

Billionaires run the world

Extremely wealthy people shape public policy through their platforms, firms, foundations, and investments—imposing their individual values and beliefs, and bypassing democratic governance principles.

Canadian national unity unravels

The sense of shared identity and common purpose that has underpinned Canadian unity is eroding dramatically. Separatist movements operate in some provinces and territories. People feel disconnected from Canada, its culture, values, climate goals, and economic priorities.

Civil war erupts in the United States

U.S. ideological divisions, democratic erosion, and domestic unrest escalate, plunging the country into civil war.

Cyberattacks disable critical infrastructure

Interruptions to essential services such as the Internet, electricity, transportation, water, and food supply systems are common due to regular cyberattacks, disrupting everyday life.



**Democratic systems
break down**

Authoritarian regimes vastly outnumber democracies and the struggle between the two ideologies is messy in many countries. Some authoritarian countries experience regular pro-democracy protests, while in many democratic countries, duly elected officials pass legislation that dismantles key democratic institutions.

**Indigenous peoples
govern unceded territory**

Indigenous peoples are formally involved in the governance of unceded territories across Canada, including in densely populated areas.

**International alliances
are in constant flux**

Geopolitical lines are redrawn often and quickly around technology, values, and economic interests. Alliances form and break on an ad-hoc basis, based on preferences and beliefs rather than fixed factors such as historical trade relations or geographical proximity.

World war breaks out

Tensions between the world's powers escalate as new rivalries, alliances, and blocs emerge. Diminishing trust, the assertion of values, acts of interference, the battle for technological superiority, and the fight over natural resources and supply chains propel great powers into a world war, forcing other countries to pick sides.

Conclusion

What could the future look like if Canadians cannot meet their basic needs? Or if the healthcare system collapses, democracies break down globally, or cyberattacks regularly disrupt everyday life? What if these disruptions occur at the same time, creating a perfect storm and a unique set of combined circumstances for Canada to face?

More than ever, the world is filled with uncertainty and unpredictability. A disruption's impact could depend on the scale and speed with which it occurs, and how it interacts with other disruptions. Being aware of possible future disruptions and prepared for various scenarios can help mitigate risk and help anticipate what is on the horizon. While the disruptions in this report are not guaranteed to take place, they are plausible—and overlooking them may carry risks in various policy areas.

These disruptions can help decision makers think through what could occur and prepare for a wide range of possibilities. They can also facilitate conversation about policy, decision making, and how these situations might play out. Foresight and conversations about future disruptions can help Canada's leaders identify challenges, harness possibilities, and create resilient, sustainable policy in the face of the unexpected.

