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Collection

Trend Deck Spring 2021

Evidence base of long-term trends for UK policy makers, Spring 2021.

From:

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Trend Deck sets out an evidence base of long-term change for UK government officials and others to use in thinking about how to create long-term benefits for society. It is part of a suite of foresight resources developed by the Government Office for Science. Our publication *A brief guide to futures thinking and foresight* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/futures-thinking-and-foresight-a-brief-guide>) introduces what futures thinking is, the benefits, where to start, networks and capability development. Our *Futures Toolkit* (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/futures-toolkit-for-policy-makers-and-analysts>) is a set of tools and techniques to help government officials use long-term strategic thinking in policy making. Versions of Trend Deck have been used across government for many years. The Spring 2021 version is the first to be made publicly available.

Trend Deck does not cover weak signals of change, which are more suited to ongoing horizon scanning, or disruptors (high impact, highly uncertain events), nor does it cover the potential implications of trends or make any suggestions for a policy response. It is not a statement of government policy.

Trend Deck guide

Nature and scope

Trends are patterns of change, based on long-term data sets. They are often expressed as increasing, decreasing or continuing (if there is no significant change). Megatrends are high level driving forces that are slow to form, strongly interconnected and with global impacts. Climate change, population growth and urbanisation are examples of megatrends. In Trend Deck we cover megatrends within both a global and UK context. Trends and megatrends can be described as drivers of change.

Trend selection

The Government Office for Science created Trend Deck by combining the published horizon scans of multiple organisations and thinking about what long-term trends mattered most to the UK government. We are grateful to colleagues in the Royal Society and a group of Research Fellows they assembled for reviewing an earlier version. This Spring 2021 version of Trend Deck has been reviewed further following feedback from the UK cross-government horizon scanning community.

Data

Where possible, we have used long-term data sets in Trend Deck that are statistically robust, for example, Office for National Statistics data, United Nations or UK government reports. These are not necessarily the definitive source of evidence but are regularly updated and therefore allow us to track change and update trends in subsequent editions of Trend Deck.

Coverage

The data sets we use cover different geographical areas, for example, England and Wales, the UK, global and different temporal scales. Some data sets go back many years, others we can only access for the last 2 to 3 years. Because of these limitations users of Trend Deck are encouraged to look for supporting evidence on individual trends that are of particular interest or add additional trends to cover gaps. There are blank cards at the end of each section for this purpose.

Structure

The Trend Deck is split into 10 colour coded sections. The contents page for each section lists the trends with hyperlinks to each card. The trend card has a headline title, an evidence-based narrative of what is changing and supporting graphic. The sources contain hyperlinks back to the original reference material.

Disruptors

Trends very rarely follow a smooth path over long periods of time. Each trend in Trend Deck will be affected by many different factors causing peaks and troughs in the data, even if it continues to follow the same general direction of travel. Trends can also be subject to disruption where a previously unknown event has a sudden and dramatic shock. The 2008 financial crash and coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic are the two main disruptors affecting Trend Deck. We can see

from the data how the longer-term impact of the 2008 financial crash has played out, as it happened over 10 years ago. COVID-19 is far more uncertain; we have seen short-term disruption to many trends over the 2019 to 2020 period but what we don't have is the evidence to see if, or how, the disruption caused by COVID-19 changes trends in the longer-term.

Using trends

Given that there are 118 trends in Trend Deck we would not expect all to be used in one foresight exercise. However, it is important to make sure a wide range of trends are considered to avoid blind spots and assumptions that the most relevant trends for a policy area or strategy will have the most impact in the long-term. What to look for and how to look at interactions and dependencies between trends is explained in the driver mapping section of the Futures Toolkit (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/futures-toolkit-for-policy-makers-and-analysts>).

Advice

The Government Office for Science can offer help, through our Futures Advisory Service, to those working in the UK government on trend-based foresight exercises. Please contact us on futures@go-science.gov.uk for further information on the service.

Future versions

Trend Deck is a living resource which we plan to update on a regular basis. If you have any comments on the trends included in this Spring 2021 version, other publicly available evidence sources (for content or geographical coverage), or suggestions for trends for a future edition of Trend Deck please let us know by contacting us on futures@go-science.gov.uk.

2. Trend Deck sections

Trend Deck is split into 10 sections:

- Climate change: Climate change and environmental trends
- Demographics: Population, migration and social trends
- Economics: Economies, trade and employment trends
- Health: Physical health, mental health and wellbeing trends
- Infrastructure: Transport and housing trends
- Natural resources: Energy, materials, water, waste and nature trends
- Governance and law: Democracy, security and crime trends
- Skills: Education, labour and employment trends
- Technology: Internet, emerging technology and space trends
- Urbanisation: Cities and land use trends

Each section contains between 8 and 14 trends. The sections can be downloaded as a pdf to make it easier to use in a workshop setting.

Download a pdf of all the trends (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-spring-2021>).

Climate Change

Climate Change

Climate change and environmental trends.

- Trend Deck 2021: Climate change (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-climate-change>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Demographics

Population, Migration and Societal Trends

- Trend Deck 2021: Demographics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-demographics>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Economics

- Trend Deck 2021: Economics (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-economics>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Health

- Trend Deck 2021: Health (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-health>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Infrastructure

- Trend Deck 2021: Infrastructure (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-infrastructure>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Natural Resources

- Trend Deck 2021: Natural Resources (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-natural-resources>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Governance and Law

- Trend Deck 2021: Governance and Law (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-governance-and-law>)
 - 28 June 2021
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Skills

- Trend Deck 2021: Skills (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-skills>)
 - 28 June 2021
 - Guidance

Technology

- Trend Deck 2021: Technology (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-technology>)
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Urbanisation

- Trend Deck 2021: Urbanisation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-urbanisation>)
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Related content

- Trend Deck 2021: Climate change (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-climate-change>)
- Trend Deck 2021: Technology (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-technology>)
- Trend Deck 2021: Skills (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-skills>)
- Trend Deck Spring 2021 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-spring-2021>)
- Trend Deck 2021: Urbanisation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/trend-deck-2021-urbanisation>)

Brexit