

# Vice President's Conversation on the Future: Descriptors for Trend Research

---

Complementing other future-focused initiatives in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, the VP Conversation is a strategic foresight project focused on developing well-considered expectations for the future that will inform a vision for OSU Extension, leading the organization into the next century.

A key step for the VP Conversation project is using expert judgment to identify the most challenging trends and issues, referred to as descriptors, for Ohioans over the next 20 years. These descriptors represent the most pressing challenges and opportunities that should be considered as we begin to think about the long-term future of OSU Extension.

These descriptors will be studied and research summaries written to further articulate the issues and implications for the future. This information will help paint a picture of possible futures in Ohio that will inform our conversations about OSU Extension's role.

More than 500 people contributed ideas in the participatory approach, designed to engage a wide array of stakeholders in discussions about the future. Asking the question "What will be the most challenging trends and issues for Ohioans by the year 2035?", we gathered input through:

- Dialogue Sessions: 40 small groups, 350+ individuals, 1,151 ideas.
- Interviews with key stakeholders.
- Survey of Stakeholders: 110 respondents (approximately 50% non-OSU).
- Forum on August 5<sup>th</sup> with elected officials, community leaders, industry experts, and futurists.

An analysis team used data from all these sources, supported by existing information on trends, to develop the 17 descriptors and definitions below.

## 17 Key Trends and Issues for Ohioans by 2035

---

### ***Alignment of Employee Skills with Job Needs***

Trends in the changing nature of work and the workforce in Ohio; specifically related to the extent that the training and skill base of people seeking jobs fit the changing needs for jobs in Ohio industries and businesses (e.g., agriculture and manufacturing).

### ***Climate Change***

Trends in global climate change and resulting impacts (e.g., weather, seasons).

### ***Crime and Terrorism***

Trends in crime rates, acts of terrorism affecting Ohio, prevention, and emergency preparedness.

### ***Economic and Employment Growth***

Trends in the economic growth in Ohio, increase or decrease in number and types of jobs, unemployment rates; research and development; influence of costs, technology, and regulations on the way business/industry function; global economy; encompasses the breadth of Ohio industries and businesses (e.g., agriculture and manufacturing); inflation; consumer confidence; household debt; wage structures; personal income.

### ***Educational Access, Attainment, and Cost***

Trends in access, delivery, attainment, and costs of education; demand for education; gaps in education levels; lifelong learning; student debt for post-secondary education; participation in higher education and other post-secondary institutions.



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

[go.osu.edu/OSUEFuture](https://go.osu.edu/OSUEFuture)

#OSUEFuture

### ***Energy Sources, Demands, and Cost***

Trends in the availability, production, uses (e.g., efficiency), and costs of energy sources (i.e., electricity, wind power, geothermal, solar, and other possible forms of fuels and energy); meeting demand.

### ***Environmental and Natural Resource Management***

Trends in quality, availability, regulation, and sustainability of air, water, & soils; environmental impacts related to management of waste (e.g., sewage, solid wastes, nutrient runoff).

### ***Food Production, Safety, and Security***

Trends in food production, distribution, retailing, and handling to meet changing patterns of consumer demand; ensuring quality, adequacy, affordability, and safety of the food supply for a global population; challenges and dynamics related to agriculture production practices.

### ***Health and Wellness***

Trends in human well being (e.g., nutrition, lifestyle, fitness, disease prevention, levels of stress, fitness); substance abuse (legal and illegal).

### ***Healthcare***

Trends in healthcare systems, access, and costs.

### ***Infrastructure***

Trends related to needs, maintenance, and costs specifically related to highways, bridges, buildings, ports, airports, waste water systems, etc.; efficient and effective transportation systems.

### ***Land Use and Geographic Population Distribution***

Trends related to how land is used (e.g., rural, urban, green space, agriculture production); urbanization; exurbia (areas of low density housing typically populated by commuters).

### ***Population Growth, Age Distribution, Immigration, and Diversity***

Trends in demographics such as population growth; migration in and out of Ohio; immigration, diversity, other demographics, and implications; general age of Ohioans; generational size and growth rates; aging population and associated issues.

### ***Public Services and Finance***

Trends in what local, state, and federal governments provide (e.g., police, fire, social services, unemployment) and how they raise revenues to pay for them (e.g., tax rates and tax structures); government structure, power, function, action, programs, and debt; citizens dependence on assistance; public regulations and economic controls; public and private sector relationships and cooperation.

### ***Social Skills, Competencies, and Relationships Across Community and Family Environments***

Trends in life skills, social interaction, volunteerism, engagement, communications, household composition, family cohesion, parenting, civic responsibilities, team work, friendliness, and general civility among Ohioans.

### ***Social, Economic, and Political Differences***

Trends in the degree of consensus, homogeneity, or polarization of economic, social, and political interests and points of view; gap between incomes and distribution of wealth among Ohioans.

### ***Technology Change and Adaptation***

Trends in the advancement of the expanse of technologies (e.g., digital information, communication technologies, automation); innovation; accessibility, security, and personalization; rates of adaptation among governments, businesses, industries, and individuals.