Global Commission on Evidence to Address Societal Challenges

10 March 2022

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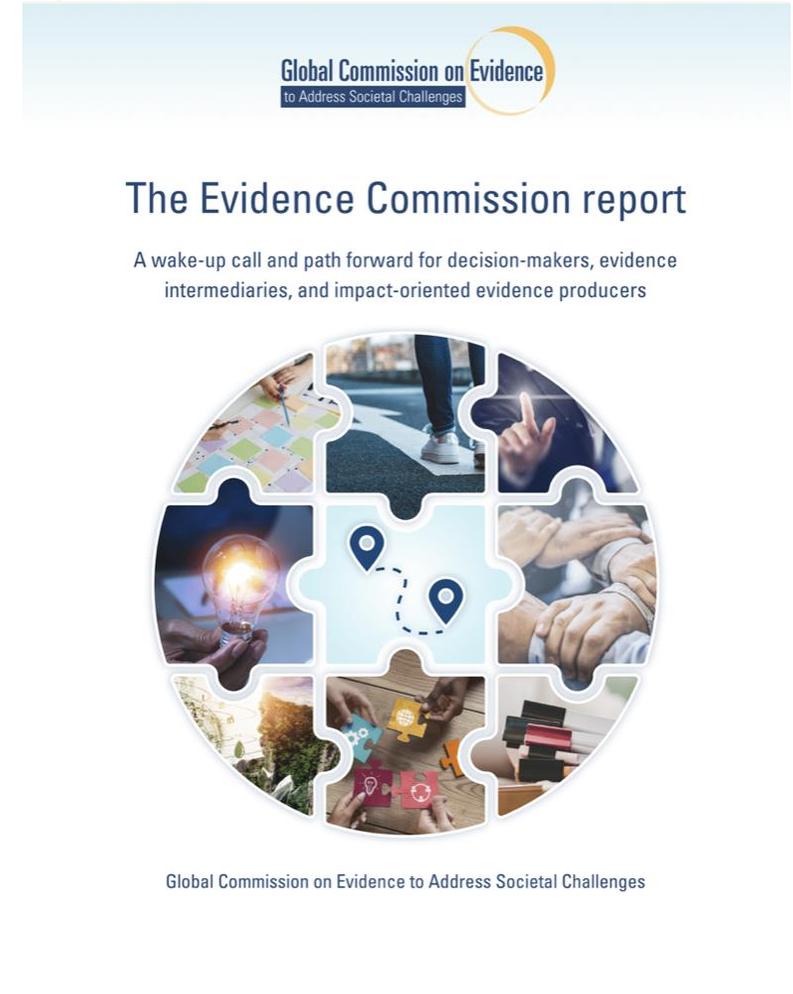Co-Lead, Evidence Commission Secretariat

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Evidence Commission report

- Two main **goals** of the report
  - Provide the context, concepts or vocabulary that underpin work in this area
  - Provide recommendations about how we can and must improve the use of evidence, both in routine times and in future global crises
- Many **versions** of the report
  - Online executive summary
  - Online full report
  - Online chapters
  - Online sections / infographics
  - Print-on-demand full report (available through Amazon) in most languages
- Available now
  - **Executive summary**: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish
  - **Online full report:** English and French
  - **Online chapters and sections**: English and French
  - **Print-on-demand full report** (through Amazon): English and French
- What will be online within the next week or two
  - **Versions in all seven languages**: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish

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to Address Societal Challenges

The Evidence Commission report

A wake-up call and path forward for decision-makers, evidence intermediaries, and impact-oriented evidence producers

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- [Wanted: Better systems for turning evidence into action](#) (Nature, 28 February 2022) – an editorial spurred by the commission

- [Getting rid of Joe Rogan won't solve the health misinformation problem](#) (The New York Times, 8 February 2022) – a guest essay co-written by commissioner Julia Belluz and secretariat co-lead John Lavis

- [5 ways to tackle ignorance about evidence during and after the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (The Conversation, 6 February 2022) – an article written by secretariat co-lead John Lavis
  - Stop chasing the latest study
  - Stop accepting unquestioningly the personal opinion of experts
  - Stop relying on recommendations from old-school expert panels
  - Stop engaging in the groupthink that can come from simply asking what other countries are doing
  - Start building the processes so evidence is a consistent feature in decision-making

- [The rise of evidence-based policymaking?](#) (Behavioural Insights Team, 31 January 2022) – a blog post written by commissioner David Halpern

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- Participate in a rapid jurisdictional **assessment** and contribute to a cross-jurisdictional **network** of government entities engaged in a similar process of systematizing and filling gaps in evidence-support systems

  - Jurisdictions: Australia, Canada (federal, BC, Ontario), Chile, China, Indonesia (TBC), Ireland, Israel, Singapore (TBC), and UK, plus additional LMICs where EVIPNet teams have the capacity, opportunity and motivation to pursue this

  - Within-jurisdiction focus: Central agencies (bringing a whole-of-government perspective) and three departments/topics (one of which is **health** and others could be **digitally supported economic transformation, education, gender-based violence, humanitarian emergency, and net-zero emissions**), as well as related UN system entities' country, regional & global offices

  - Methods: website/document review and 10 interviews to identify evidence-support structures and processes (e.g., behavioural-insights and evaluation units; expert advisory groups) → prioritization of what to systematize and what gaps to fill

  - Example of a prioritized list of next steps for one jurisdiction:
    - Adapt the UK cabinet office approach to eliciting 'areas of interest' where political leaders have unanswered questions and then flow evidence funding to these priorities
    - Start a conversation among evidence producers about reducing duplication and increasing quality, caution them about expert opinion and old-school expert panels, and expose them to new approaches (like living syntheses & guidelines) and to domestic and global assets
    - Adapt the COVID-END model for domestic evidence-demand and evidence-supply coordination (e.g., a one-year investment of $1.34M yielded 86 products on 34 topics – keeping in mind that some of these topics are massive, like what do we know about vaccine effectiveness against variants – as well as the intake / scoping / commissioning process, inventory of best evidence syntheses, twice-per-month spotlights, and monthly horizon scans to identify emerging issues)
    - Experiment with new evidence products (including infographics) that bring together many forms of evidence, continue to innovate in stakeholder- and citizen-engagement processes and begin supporting the government's many advisory groups, and use a collective-impact approach in all of this work (only in line departments like health or in partnership with other units in central agencies)
    - Influence the prioritization of and leverage evidence-related global public goods directly (e.g., through domestic contributions) and through what we hope will be future multi-lateral bodies' investments (e.g., Cochrane, Campbell, CEE, and PROSPERO)
    - Institutionalize evidence use by build capacity for it, prompting it (e.g., evidence checklist and advisory-group procedures), documenting it, and ideally rewarding it

- G20 briefing note and advocacy effort focused on securing
  - a soft commitment by all members
  - a hard commitment by select members, likely built around priority topics, including now a humanitarian emergency
- UN system
  - Secretary-General (e.g., to influence the re-establishment of a scientific advisory board)
  - WHO chief scientist
  - UNICEF executive director
  - UN resident coordinator in countries like China
- World Bank
- Global evidence producers
- Funders' networks

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Next steps with citizens and citizen-serving NGOs at the country level and at the global level

(13) **Evidence in everyday life** — **Citizens should consider making decisions about their and their families' well-being based on best evidence; spending their money on products and services that are backed by best evidence; volunteering their time and donating money to initiatives that use evidence to make decisions about what they do and how they do it; and supporting politicians who commit to using best evidence to address societal challenges and who commit (along with others) to supporting the use of evidence in everyday life.** Government policymakers, among others, need to ensure that citizens have access to best evidence, evidence-checked claims, and simple-to-use evidence-backed resources and websites to make informed choices at all times, not just during global crises. They also need to help build citizens' media and information literacy, provide the transparency needed for citizens to know when decisions, services and initiatives are based on best evidence, and more generally create a culture where evidence is understood, valued and used.

Related sections: **3.6** Citizens and the context for their use of evidence | **4.11** Misinformation and infodemics | Aligned reports: (3; 5; 10; 16; 18; 19)

- Establish a small leadership group (e.g., commissioners Maureen Smith and Modupe Adefeso-Olateju)
- Identify citizen-serving organizations and encourage them to join us and to take a specific leadership rôle
  - Country-level examples – Canadian Treatment Action Council, Evidence for Democracy, and IMAGINE
  - Global examples – Cochrane's plain-language summaries, People's Health Movement
- Curate resources on the Evidence Commission website that can support action
  - Commission infographics (e.g., 3.6 Citizens, 4.9 Contexts, 4.10 Indigenous, 4.11 Misinformation, 5.3 Strategies)
  - Articles (e.g., New York Times on misinformation)
  - Examplars of governments and organizations providing evidence support to citizens

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