



UBC Decision Insights for Business & Society

Annual Report for the 2023-2024 Academic Year

UBC SAUDER
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

DIBS
Decision Insights for Business & Society

Overview of UBC Decision Insights for Business & Society

Decision Insights for Business & Society ([UBC-DIBS](#)) is a behavioural research and policy solutions initiative at UBC Sauder School of Business. Our mission is to improve outcomes across major societal and planetary challenges by improving our understanding of decision-making, encouraging long-term behaviour change, and working together toward an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable future.

Why Decision Insights

Every day we make hundreds of small decisions—what to eat, how much to save, and how to commute. With 8 billion people making these decisions 365 days a year, the impacts of these small, individual decisions can add up to big, societal problems. As a result, individual human decisions are a critical part of both the cause *and* the solution for our most urgent societal and planetary challenges (e.g., the climate crisis, income inequality, and decolonization).

The behavioural and decision sciences (e.g., psychology, consumer behaviour, economics, and related fields) use the scientific method to explore why and how people make decisions and behave. They combine economic incentives and psychological factors to build and rigorously test theories of decision-making and behaviour. The applied field of behavioural insights (BI) draws on the behavioural and decision sciences to “nudge” people to make choices that are better for themselves and the world.

What We Do

This report summarizes the 2023-2024 academic year (June 2023-May 2024) and covers:

- [Our Behavioural & Decision Science Research Projects](#), which use the scientific method and an interdisciplinary approach to build and test theories of decision-making and behaviour in the lab, online, and in the field. We collaborate with partners in the public, private, and non-profit sectors to apply research insights to real-world problems.
- [Our Behavioural Insights Training Programs](#), which help working professionals develop and practice the BI knowledge and skills to tackle problems and create positive behavioural change by designing behaviourally-informed solutions, rigorously evaluating solutions, and using BI ethically.
- [Our Behavioural Insights Events & Resources](#), which support a growing interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral BI community that connects academic researchers, policymakers, executives, and BI enthusiasts and experts across the public, non-profit, and private sectors in British Columbia and beyond.

Land Acknowledgment

UBC-DIBS is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the [xwməθkwəy̓əm \(Musqueam\)](#), [Skwxwú7mesh \(Squamish\)](#), and [Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh \(Tsleil-Waututh\) Nations](#). We gratefully acknowledge these peoples, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next in this area. As behavioural scientists, we are committed to closing the intention-action gap by working toward an [anti-racist, Indigenized practice of behavioural science](#).

Funding

The UBC-DIBS cluster and our research are funded in part by a UBC Grant for Catalyzing Research Clusters, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Development Grant, SSHRC Insight Grants, and SSHRC Insight Development Grants.



Behavioural & Decision Science Research

Featured Research Project

Nourishing Change: Leveraging Food for Sustainability, Health, and Recovery in Healthcare Settings

According to a [2019 Lancet Commission](#), a healthy, sustainable diet could decrease food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 50% and save 11 million lives. The recommended diet includes eating more (and more diverse) plant-based foods and less animal-based food, highly processed food, and food with saturated fats and added sugars.

UBC-DIBS partnered with the Planetary Healthcare Lab (PHCL) and Vancouver Coastal Health on three projects encouraging healthy, sustainable food choices among different groups of people in healthcare settings.

Healthcare Workers: Healthcare worker wellness is foundational to delivering quality care. Yet, healthcare facilities often lack access to healthy, sustainable food overnight and on weekends. Healthy, low-carbon meals were provided free of charge after hours to on-call General Surgery residents. The impact on resident well-being was assessed using pre- and post-intervention surveys. Financial and time stress reduced significantly with the provision of meals, while emotional and physical stress levels did not change. We recommend hospitals increase access to healthy, sustainable food options to improve resident health and well-being.

For more details:

Lalande, A., Alexis, S., Mak, S., Zhao, J., & MacNeill, A. (in press). [Improving staff wellness via an after-hours healthy sustainable meals program: A general surgery residency pilot](#). *Healthcare Management Forum*.

Hospital Cafeteria Visitors: Despite the benefits of a healthy, sustainable diet, changing dietary behaviours is challenging. We assessed the impacts of two behavioral insights strategies (salience and availability) on bridging the intention-action gap related to healthy, sustainable food choices amongst hospital cafeteria patrons. In a pilot survey of hospital staff, 56% identified limited awareness and availability of sustainable food as barriers to purchasing, and 46% were extremely willing to try sustainable dishes. In Study 1, increasing salience was associated with significant uptake of healthy, sustainable dishes, with loss of the effect once the salience intervention was removed. In Study 2a, increasing availability of healthy, sustainable dishes correlated with a significant increase in purchases with a larger effect size, while in Study 2b decreasing availability was associated with a downward trend, suggesting that availability drove dietary choices. We recommend hospitals increase the salience and availability of healthy, sustainable options.

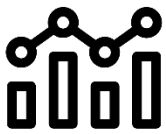
For more details:

Spovalo, K., Viduka, N., Dixon, S., MacNeill, A., & Zhao, J. (under review). Using salience and availability to promote sustainable food choices in hospital cafeterias.

Patients: Malnutrition in hospital settings is associated with increased adverse events, and patient dissatisfaction is often an important driver of poor food intake in hospitals. The objective of this study was to examine patient satisfaction with current menu offerings, and explore patient preferences and values. A survey was distributed to inpatients receiving a lunch tray over 2.5 months at a large tertiary care centre. Satisfaction with food quality and overall experience was lower than industry benchmark, and qualitative feedback was generally negative. Patients were interested in expanded cultural diversity in food provision, more fresh produce, and better flavours, and were generally open to trying plant-rich foods. A number of opportunities for improvement were identified, especially around taste and increased provision of fresher and more culturally relevant foods. Our findings will inform an upcoming menu redesign in this institution.

For more details:

Lalande, A., Patterson, K., Gadhari, N., MacNeill, A., & Zhao, J. (in press). Evaluating patient experience with food in a hospital-wide survey. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*.



Created by Alice Design
from Flour Project

2023-2024: Our core team published 18 peer-reviewed journal articles, presented at over 12 conferences, and gave many media interviews. We collaborated with partners on a number of field experiments and quasi-experiments. Lastly, we were awarded almost \$1,000,000 in grant funding, including a new UBC Grant for Catalyzing Research Clusters.

Behavioural Insights Training



Fundamentals of Behavioural Insights



Created by Tegawan Sorokany from Noun Project

This three-week online [course](#) introduces behavioural insights, experimentation, and ethics. The course is offered multiple times per year.

2023-2024: We welcomed 81 students from government (26%), academia (22%), and other parts of the public (23%), private (21%), non-profit (4%), and other sectors (4%).

Advanced Professional Certificate in Behavioural Insights



This nine-month, part-time, online [program](#) combines coursework and a capstone project to provide rigorous BI practitioner training. See our [brochure](#) for details.

2023-2024: We celebrated the graduation of 17 BI practitioners! Working with partner organizations, student teams completed projects tackling issues including organ donation, appliance recycling, program uptake and evaluation, and regulation compliance.

BIG Difference BC Scholarship



UBC-DIBS co-administers the \$5,000 [BIG Difference BC Scholarship](#) for a BC-based working professional in the public or non-profit sector. To make access to BI more equitable, priority is given to people who identify as IBPOC, 2SLGBTQ+, persons with disability, and/or women.

2023-2024: We are pleased to announced that our 2023-2024 BIG Difference BC Scholar was Gordana Rauski, Director of Operations with the Coquitlam Public Library.

Behavioural Insights Events

BIG Difference BC Conference

Each year, we work with the BC Behavioural Insights Group and WorkSafeBC to cohost our free, online conference, which celebrates using BI for positive impact across topics and sectors in BC and beyond.



BIG Difference BC 2023: In 2023, we explored “[Using Behavioural Insights to Improve How We Work](#)” with over 1,596 registrants from 44 countries. Registrants represented federal, provincial, and local governments, universities, and a variety of other public, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

- Dr. Betsy Levy Paluck (Princeton University) delivered a keynote address on “Engineering Social Change Using Social Norms”.
- A special session on “Using Behavioural Insights to Improve How We Communicate” featured Nicholas Diamond (Government of Canada), Bing Feng (TD Wealth), and Dave Trudinger (Government of New South Wales) in conversation with Kerri Buschel (WorkSafeBC).
- 14 lightning talks and micro-presentations shared projects using BI to improve hybrid work, help in humanitarian settings, increase emotional resilience, counter misinformation, improve registration and response rates, tackle public health and safety challenges, understand how people make decisions, reduce vulnerability to cyber crime, promote sustainable eating, and reduce smartphone addiction.



BIG Difference BC 2024: Save the date for our seventh annual conference on Friday, November 1, when our theme will be “[Applying Behavioural Insights to Urgent Challenges](#)”.

Behavioural Insights Seminar Series

Our seminar series invites researchers and practitioners to share their field and lab projects using BI to "nudge for good". Details of upcoming seminars and recordings of past seminars are available on the [BI Wiki](#).

2023-2024: We hosted 7 seminars that drew an average of 208 registrants, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, and members of the public. Researchers shared work tackling the climate crisis, understanding and improving the criminal justice system, and exploring how we make decisions about the future.

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UBC-DIBS Behavioural Insights Seminar Series 2023-2024

UBC-DIBS is excited to announce this year's outstanding line-up of researchers and practitioners sharing their field and lab projects using the behavioural and decision sciences to "nudge for good".

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>Fri., Sept. 8, 2023 Anuj Shah (University of Chicago)</p> |  <p>Fri., Oct. 13, 2023 Jessica Leifer (Impact & Innovation Unit)</p> |  <p>Fri., Dec. 8, 2023 Matthew Davies (Behavioural Science Aotearoa)</p> |
|  <p>Fri., Jan. 12, 2024 Rishad Habib (Toronto Metropolitan University)</p> |  <p>Fri., Feb. 9, 2024 Hal Hershfield (UCLA)</p> |  <p>Fri., Mar. 8, 2024 Shahzeen Attari (Indiana University)</p> |
|  <p>Fri., Apr. 12, 2024 Dale Griffin (UBC)</p> | | |

Register at <https://bit.ly/DIBSseminars>. Seminars are 1-2pm PT on select Fridays. Learn about UBC-DIBS at <http://sauder.ubc.ca/DIBS>.

Research Lab

Our lab meetings provide an informal venue to share, discuss, and provide feedback on emerging behavioural and decision science research ideas and projects in progress. To provide a supportive, collegial environment for sharing early work, lab meetings are reserved for UBC-DIBS members and partners

2023-2024: We convened lab six times to discuss work in progress from a mix of UBC graduate students and junior faculty and practitioners from partner organizations.

Behavioural Insights Resources

Featured Resource

Behavioural Insights Wiki



Created by Gregor Giesler
from the Noun Project

Our [BI Wiki](#) is an online resource repository for BI enthusiasts and experts. It includes a newsfeed, episodes of our podcast, recordings of seminars, working papers, a library of recommended BI reads/watches/listens, tools for conducting BI projects, and learning and career resources.

This year we prioritized making our wiki resources inclusive and accessible. As part of this work, we conducted an accessibility audit, which led us to add image alt text, increase colour contrast, and switch to more readable fonts. For the podcast, we have added closed captioning to all episodes and are in the midst of adding written transcripts for each episode.

Our biggest project of the year is the creation of a new [wiki page on anti-racist, Indigenized behavioural science](#). The page tells the story of behavioural science's WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) history, how people in the field are helping move toward an anti-racist and Indigenized practice of behavioural science, and how behavioural science can contribute toward anti-racism and Reconciliation. The page includes a glossary of key terms, annotated lists of resources, and a selection of general resources and culturally significant dates. The launch of the new page was complemented by a themed [issue of the BIG Difference BC newsletter](#) and several topical [podcast episodes](#).

The project benefitted from the contributions of many, including Stephanie Papik, Crystal Hall, and Rhiannon Mosher and her colleagues at the Public Health Agency of Canada's Behavioural Science Office. We are excited for the page to continue to grow and evolve with additional contributions from the community.

2023-2024: In addition to the new wiki page, we added an average of 3 wiki posts each week, for over 130 items this year. The wiki auto-sends the latest posts to 90+ subscribers on a weekly basis.

Calling DIBS Podcast



Our *Calling DIBS* podcast is a glimpse into the world of behavioural insights through interviews with BI enthusiasts and experts from BC and beyond. The podcast is available on the [BI Wiki](#) as well as [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), and [Amazon Music](#).

2023-2024: The podcast received over 3,000 listens this year. We released 20 episodes covering:

- How to lay the groundwork for BI projects, conduct secondary research, and use qualitative methods
- Applying BI in humanitarian settings, big organizations, the Global South, and across sectors
- Using BI to tackle challenges in community services, financial planning, and public health
- The intersection of BI with change management and data science
- Current topics like data fraud, context effects, and how BI is evolving
- Questioning assumptions and updating methods to move toward an anti-racist, Indigenized BI

BIG Difference BC Community & Resources

UBC-DIBS works with the BC Behavioural Insights Group (BC BIG) to manage [BIG Difference BC](#), a network of BI enthusiasts and experts from government, academia, and across the public, non-profit, and private sectors in BC and beyond. A [cross-sectoral advisory board](#) provides strategic oversight as well as creative and logistical input. In addition to our annual conference, UBC-DIBS and BC BIG also collaborate to deliver:



BIG Difference BC Newsletter: Our joint monthly [newsletter](#) shares news, “choice events”, “choice reads”, “choice tips”, and other highlights from across our network.



BIG Difference BC Blog: Our joint [blog](#) features a wide variety of content, including glimpses of how practitioners use BI, examples of BI in the wild, case studies, topical issues, and guest posts from community members.

2023-2024: The BIG Difference BC website saw over 12,000 visits. We released 10 issues of our newsletter to over 3,700 newsletter subscribers. We published 9 blog posts which together saw over 750 views.

Our People

Core Team



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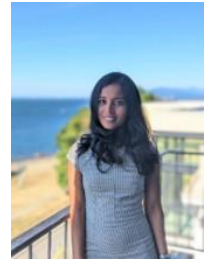
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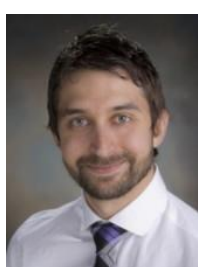
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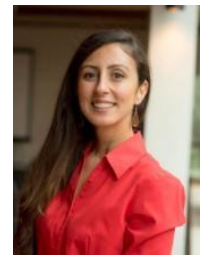
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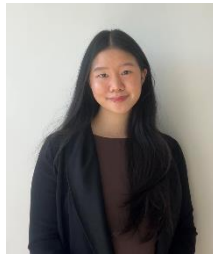
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