

Future changes to the structure and function of society

Anticipated changes are predominantly driven by technological advances' resulting in dramatic social change - **social change theories** - which occurs when the following are impacted simultaneously, with speed:

1. **Pressure on social structure:** the resilience of institutions that moderate society's function.
2. **Change in societal norms:** the propensity for the majority of the population to abide by common norms and rules.
3. **Personal and cultural identities:** the ability of individuals and communities to understand their source of identity and worldview.

Drivers of change include: changing models of trust; the growth of pervasive surveillance; a move toward new forms of more accessible power; the rise of hashtag politics and sports activism; increased feelings of social isolation; the changing nature of work, etc.

Sport and active recreation can bring diverse communities together, impact mental health and resilience, and contribute to a sense of individual purpose.

This resource is part of a series which considers the changes and trends most likely to impact the future of the play, active recreation and sport sector and what we can do to best prepare for change.

Summary implications

Technology-enabled ideas eroding trust in institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust in organisations difficult to maintain: Particularly at international level where commercial stakes are high, pressure on integrity will increase.• Disruptive technologies used to impact athlete reputations: International competitions where the stakes are high may lead to less scrupulous competitors or states to deploy disruptive technologies. It is plausible to imagine a leading athlete being brought down not through competition, but through a faked recording admitting to drug use or similar scandal.
The growth of pervasive surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenging harmful business models: The ubiquity of social media platforms has made them a fundamental component of local event organisation and information sharing. As concern increases over the (mis) use of data by platforms, what role can sport and recreation organisations play in either mitigating the challenge or supporting alternative forms of community?
Shifting power	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sport and recreation role to create collective resilience: At a time of unprecedented change, what role can sport and recreation play to help individuals deal with the transition constructively?
Democracy under threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The need to explore alternate trust platforms: What beneficial technologies or approaches are available to ensure the future integrity of sport and recreation is seen to be maintained?
Rise of hashtag politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positioning sport in relation to broader social/political questions: as an integral component of society, the traditional perspective of sport and recreation institutions, to remain neutral on debates will be increasingly challenged.
Sport Activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staying ahead of the political curve: the speed of development and impact of social movements will remain high. How do sport and recreation bodies anticipate and respond to disparate challenges?• Athlete activism is likely to increase: If more athletes spoke up on matters of public importance, what would be the implications in a number of areas, such as fan engagement, sponsorships, relationships within teams, athlete health and welfare, and society in general?
Athlete activism changing partnership with brands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding aligned to social good: There may need to be a far broader demonstration of the social wellbeing outcomes associated with particular sport and recreation activity if future funding is to be unlocked.
Technology contributing to feelings of increased social isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risks to physical and mental health: Evidence suggests that feelings of loneliness pose risks to physical and mental health. What role can sport and recreation play to improve mental health?• Communities could change in form and function. Communities determined by circumstance may become deemphasized in favour of digitally connected “chosen” communities. With these communities able to bring together people with shared interests and views, how might sport and recreation interact with immediate, physical communities remains in question.
Changing nature of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health linked to identity: Mental health statistics may worsen in the event of future dislocation in the working environment. Recreation and sport may be a critical forum to support people in finding a renewed sense of purpose.
Immigration pressures likely to increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing need for cross-cultural bridges: Sport and recreation as a role in social bridging and building social cohesion.

Personal identity becoming more varied

- **As genderfluidity develops, strongly gender-aligned activities will come under pressure.** The few instances where questions of transgender sport participation have been raised to date are likely to become more frequent if/when wider society becomes more open to gender fluidity.
- **Changing profile of national sport representation:** In future, the emergence of new forms of identity expression may weaken the traditional relationship between the individual's sense of identity and its embodiment through specific sporting codes

The potential for a post-gender society

- **How would sport function in a post-gender society?** While mixed teams increasingly be the future norm, and could that be beneficial for wider sport and recreation participation?
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Background

- Critical component of the extent of social change: the speed at which a trend shifts perspectives. Technological change is the fastest moving driver of change within society.
- 84% of global business leaders are looking for a [co-ordinated global response](#). However, 76% feel governments not doing enough to plan effectively for the impact of technology driven change on society.
- Rapid social change impacts social structure, societal norms and personal and cultural identity.

Social structure pressures

Society functions through the resilient operations of social structures that help shape the norms, roles, behaviours, and values of community members that support overall wellbeing. A fundamental quality necessary for these structures to remain stable is the trust citizens have in these operations.

Public trust in New Zealand is not at crisis point. Will New Zealand maintain its levels of public trust in the medium to long term?

What's changing?

Technology-enabled ideas eroding trust in institutions

- The nature of trust is undergoing a dramatic shift in contemporary society. We are moving away from a top-down relationship with established institutions and toward a new, horizontal trust relationship with peers.
- Shocks like the 2008 financial crisis amplified skepticism about the established institutions. Technological change is sapping confidence, with access to information about institutions heightened via internet.
- New technologies don't just undermine institutional trust by revealing secrets, they can also distort the truth. [Deloitte identified credibility](#) as the component of trust to be causing numerous issues in the world today. Trust in news sources declining.
- Poorly researched/ false claims spread rapidly through social-media, undermining traditional investigative reporting.

- Fake news is also getting harder to detect.
- [Experts are evenly split](#) on whether the coming decade will see a reduction in false narratives online.
- These technology-led changes amount to a significant assault on the credibility of established institutions. Once misdeeds are exposed, rebuilding trust is exceptionally difficult.

The growth of pervasive surveillance

- Today's technologies create a reputation trail for us all – e.g. Uber or Airbnb.
- Rating platforms enable governments and commercial entities to monitor populations.
- The Chinese government is embracing technologies like facial recognition and AI to identify and track 1.4 billion people nationwide – the Chinese Social Credit System – rates all Chinese citizens & appraises their overall trustworthiness.
- State sanctioned surveillance is not limited to China. US prison authorities have enrolled hundreds of thousands of [incarcerated people's voice prints](#) into large-scale biometric databases. Plans are also afoot to mine social media posts.
- Recent [Five Eyes discussions](#) that focused on the need for spies and police officers to be given special, backdoor access to WhatsApp and other encrypted communications suggests state sanctioned surveillance could increase.
- Surveillance capitalists such as Google, Facebook and Amazon have discovered the most predictive sources of data are when they come in and intervene in people's lives, through real-time actions, to influence our action in a way their customers want.
- Google is no longer just about building a search engine, but instead building [the world brain that will take care of every person, all the time and everywhere](#). Amazon's Alexa team wants to take this a step further by analysing the sound of users' voices to [recognise their mood or emotional state](#). Similarly, Facebook now seeks to [own all the data of all the interpersonal/community interactions in the world](#) and profit from them.
- Tech trends associated with government & social media platforms are increasingly concerning citizens who both benefit from them, but also provide the valuable data.

New trust models

- People are increasingly seeking digital trust. [Blockchain may provide the solution](#). Blockchain technology is an emerging platform for trust, providing a record of every action undertaken by anything using the technology.
- Blockchain technology has other uses. The permanent online ledger makes it easy to double-check claims and expose fake news before it spreads on social media.
- Blockchain may also impact the way we interact with the world by making middlemen – such as bankers, lawyers and real estate agents – redundant.
- This is already happening. [Estonia provides an example](#).

Shift away from hierarchical power

- Digital connectivity is instigating a shift away from the old hierarchical power to more accessible forms that prize decentralisation, collaboration and transparency.
- Before the 21st century, society was imagined as a giant machine, with people as cogs. Corporations made decisions for those participating in their power systems.
- Digital connectivity has given rise to distributed digital networks that underpin new civil society groups (e.g. mass protests in Hong Kong). Individuals have higher expectations of interactions with business and government.
- New power is changing people's roles. The traditional 'passive' consumer who advertisers influence, is being supplanted by the likes of YouTube bloggers.

Democracy under threat

- This shift in power caused by digital connectivity is raising doubt about the control of societies through current forms of political discourse, including democracy.
- [A time of rapid technological change](#) encourages innovative capitalists to make the rules around how their activities impact us. Technology threatens both by creating a [100-year peak in wealth disparity](#), while the internet works to hasten a retreat to tribes through its highly tailored foundations.
- Today, the laws governing [the principle of democracy](#) are largely made by platforms that escape any counterbalancing power, and are not at all transparent.
- Democracy is increasingly driven by political technologists whose only concern is to deliver a majority for a paying client e.g. Cambridge Analytica.

Challenging societal norms

Stable society depends on resilient social structures and the conformance of community members to habitual behaviours and norms.

What's changing?

The rise of 'hashtag' politics

- Social media activism has changed the pace, impact and reach of social campaigns, enabling disparate activist populations to align and challenge norms.
- [The anti-globalisation protests](#) have pioneered new ways of decentralised, leaderless and internet-enabled organising.
- [Climate strikes provide a clear example of counter-cultural action.](#)
- [The hashtag enables the efficient emergence of certain types of communities](#) that have developed a social and political power.

Sport as an arena for activism

- Sport has a long history of political activism, but social media movements and the perception of commercial advantage (e.g. Nike) will likely strengthen this trend.

- [Female athletes' activism is taking off](#) as their sport grows in status and popularity, fuelled by social media.
- [Gender equality activism on and off the pitch is likely to intensify](#) as global awareness of gender imbalance has spiked in recent years.
- TJ Perenara's 'Ihumātao' show of solidarity during the last All Black Test is an example of the growing acceptability of this type of protest within NZ sport.

Athlete activism is changing partnerships with brands

- It's now acceptable for [brands and athletes collaborating on social issues](#) – e.g. LeBron James' documentary with Showtime.
- [Brands are making long-term demographic calculations](#) when embracing progressive political causes.
- [Political polarisation and viral social movements](#) like #grabyourwallet, #MeToo and #TimesUp, have changed the face of brand engagement and consumer loyalty.
- [Being bold and taking a stance is fast becoming the norm for brand campaigns](#) as "belief-driven buying" is at an all-time high. 90% of millennials will likely switch to a brand if it associates with a cause they support.

Personal and cultural identities

Accelerating change that challenges societal structures and influences collective norms also has a substantial impact on the community and individual sense of identity.

What's changing?

Technology contributing to feelings of social isolation

- Tech serves both to connect and contribute to feelings of isolation.
- Social media, if relied upon for social fulfillment, can cause [loneliness and depression](#). Children who grew up using social media reportedly show lower social literacy and [emotional intelligence](#)¹.
- Technology's increasing ability to tailor products to individuals, potentially reinforces isolation. AI and [augmented reality](#) could enhance potential for tailoring moment-to-moment experience.

The changing nature of work

- Given the centrality of work within society, any significant shifts in work landscape can have profound social implications. [Our relationships are structured around the places where we spend our time](#). Need to rethink how we live and work to make lives better for everyone².
- [Capitalism's success](#) is centred on human yearning for success and recognition, to thrive and be prosperous. If the era of mass employment comes to an end, [what happens to a society without work's moral framework?](#)

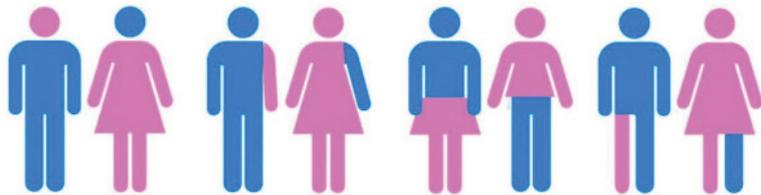
¹ Emerging Global Challenges; June 2018

² UK Chief Medical Officer; 2018

- Increase in automation, and more isolated nature of operating in the growing gig economy³, impacts feelings of isolation.
- The NZ gig economy is currently a small part of the labour market, with 75% of workers in permanent employment, although it is growing.

Immigration pressures likely to increase

- Global instability is likely to increase the numbers of people leaving their home countries, placing pressure on NZ resettling max 1,000 refugees annually. Vital need for durable, inclusive conversation on national identity and diversity.
- When cultural differences between immigrants and natives are substantial, opposition to immigration can arise even if immigrants are on average economically beneficial.
- Internal demographic change is likely to encourage more liberal immigration policy. Canada highlighted as potentially the first 'post national' country. Demographic drivers for NZ are similar. Will social pressures end the nation-state's role as the primary instrument of human governance?



Personal identity becoming more varied

- Demise of nation state concept could be fuelled by greater focus on individual identity, with identity increasingly based on a creed or idea, rather than biology – e.g. the rise of gender fluidity.
- There is an increasing number of examples of nations developing more sophisticated perspectives on gender identity.
- Organisations, too, are increasingly embracing a more fluid perspective of identity.
- Advocates for broader gender understanding envisage a future where gender definition is less important.

The potential for a post-gender society

- Broader gender perspective will need changes to language structures and power relationships that are adopted by the wider community too.
- Post-gender perspectives envisage a world where “patriarchal culture will be stripped apart, and a new culture, yet to be created, will emerge victorious. Merit rather than sexist power and privilege will be the dominant characteristic in the professional world.”
- Post genderists propose that gender in humans should be voluntary and that we should rely on advanced technology to replace it.

³ Temporary jobs commonplace and tendency to hire independent contractors instead of full-time employees