

# Trust in institutions & information

While some countries and organisations still maintain high levels of trust, this is fragile. Institutional trust generally appears to be declining. A variety of factors are behind the declines, with perceptions of competence in being able to address changes and other challenges a critical one. Mis and disinformation are also rapidly spreading, enabled by social media platforms and rising fears of disenfranchisement in the face of changes.

## What we're seeing

### Declining trust in institutions

There is "a new era of information bankruptcy and a trust ecosystem unable to confront it."<sup>1</sup>

Globally there is generally declining trust in public institutions,<sup>2</sup> businesses, NGOs, and the media.<sup>1, 3, 4, 5</sup>

The pandemic, rising inequalities & racial injustices, greed, scandals, collection & use of personal data, increasing surveillance, and inaction over climate change contribute to this trend.<sup>2, 6, 7, 8, 9</sup>

### Trust in NZ's government is strong, at the moment

Some countries, like New Zealand, have maintained high levels of trust.<sup>2</sup> Trust in NZ's public services have been rising since 2007, especially for those who have used or experienced them.<sup>10</sup>

New Zealand, & Scandinavian countries are consistently perceived as the least corrupt.<sup>11</sup>

### Trust in sporting organisations, not so much

Several recent reviews into bullying and abuse allegations at several NZ sporting organisations have affected trust in sport. This is leading to a greater focus on player welfare.<sup>12</sup> Sporting bodies elsewhere are also facing similar issues.

### Competence is a key factor influencing trust

Trust in institutions is driven by a variety of factors, such as competence, transparency, accountability, fairness, polarisation, values, and corruption.<sup>13</sup>

### Rise in mis and disinformation

Misinformation (incorrect use of information) & disinformation (malicious use) have been increasing for some time, but has accelerated during the pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Most New Zealanders think misinformation is increasing, but there is less agreement on how to tackle it.<sup>15</sup>

### Platforms and partisanship

Social media platforms and increasing partisanship are seen as key factors in the rise of mis and disinformation.<sup>16</sup>

Both online and off there is increasing exposure to disinformation, leading more people down rabbit holes.<sup>17, 18</sup>

As popular social media sites take more action against disinformation, the information and associated discussions are moving to platforms where oversight is less, such as Telegraph. The ease of sharing such information, and algorithmic decisions are also exposing different groups to more mis and disinformation.<sup>14, 19</sup>

Social media users who don't trust news sites often make snap judgements about truth when they do come across news.<sup>20</sup>

For some during the pandemic refusing to be vaccinated has become part of their identity, making it difficult to change attitudes or decisions.<sup>14</sup>

## Potential implications

### Create

- Alternative competing realities

### Relate

- Sense of identity becoming more linked to online communities

### Consume

- Increasing passivity in finding new and alternate sources of information
- Reducing curiosity in alternative views

### Degrade

- Increasing fragmentation of news and information sources
- Past rules and norms being undermined or no longer fit for purpose

### Connect

- Competency and transparency are key factors in maintaining institutional trust

### Define

- Identities becoming narrowed and polarised
- Trust earned not dictated

### More information (links)

<sup>1</sup> [Trust in public institutions](#)

<sup>2</sup> [2021 Edelman Trust Barometer](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Banking profits under pressure](#)

<sup>4</sup> [\\$430 million a year in excess supermarket profits](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Oxfam sexual exploitation scandal](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Building trust in government's use of data](#)

<sup>7</sup> ['We are hurtling towards a surveillance state'](#)

<sup>8</sup> [A breakdown in climate, a breakdown in trust](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Restoring citizen trust on climate change](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Trust and confidence in the public service](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Corruption Perceptions Index 2021](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Reviews and recriminations in NZ sport](#)

<sup>13</sup> [The Report Of The Knight Commission On Trust, Media And Democracy](#)

<sup>14</sup> [The Disinformation Project](#)

<sup>15</sup> [The edge of the infodemic](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Guide to overcoming coronavirus misinformation](#)

<sup>17</sup> ['So many rabbit holes'](#)

<sup>18</sup> [When a relative falls down a rabbit hole](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Recommendations still push harmful videos](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Snap judgements made by those who don't trust news](#)