

COVID-19

This scan looks to highlight some of the longer-term implications from COVID-19 that are now emerging for the play, active recreation and sport sector. It explores:

1. **Assumed crisis trajectory:** An assessment of the assumed short-term (3-6 month) outcome of the crisis. Potential reprieve for NZ, but significant impacts globally.
2. **Longer term uncertainties:** In the absence of a vaccine the severity of the impact depends on effective government strategies. With failures already evident, expect ongoing disruption into 2021/22.
3. **Financial impact:** Will the severity of the crisis take economies beyond recession into a lengthy period of depression?
4. **Wider societal wellbeing:** Beyond the initial physical health crisis, the need for mental health support and broader societal resilience will become more prominent.
5. **Globalisation:** A more fragmented and polarised world will upend previous assumptions of global interconnectedness.
6. **Political leadership:** Now is the time for all organisations to take their cue from the unprecedented steps governments globally are taking to address the crisis.
7. **Mobility and proximity behaviour:** The future of play, active recreation and sport will be shaped by the extent to which physical connection and movement behaviours change.
8. **Impact on sport:** A challenging short-term horizon, but what questions need to be addressed for the longer term?

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

Creation of new normal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Champion an agenda for physical activity by being at table with other Ministries and local government.• Who can we learn from that already have models for integrating play, active recreation and sport activity into daily life.
Living with social distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May become a determinant for whether people engage in team activities, what teams they join and whether they volunteer.• Opportunity to design a system that gives local physical activity a higher status – promoting connectedness, opportunities, ease and cost.• May result in resurgence of doping given postponement of all testing.
Ongoing pandemics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to adapt to increased demands for sanitation ‘surveillance’ for contact tracing, health monitoring.• Public facilities (pools, playgrounds) may have to restrict numbers of visitors, set different hours for vulnerable groups.
Border control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trans-Tasman competitions on ice for 18 months or longer e.g. Super Rugby, A-League.• Implications for New Zealand’s attractiveness as a host nation for sporting events given geographic distance, risk of reinfection, reluctance to travel.
Economic recession	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of funding for community sport and recreation groups, as funders direct their efforts toward ‘community at risk’ projects that are also struggling for funds e.g. vulnerable children.• Return to local and voluntary run sector requires need to actively support and champion volunteers as coaches, administrators etc.
Cost as a barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drop in paid participation from those unable to afford entry (through possible increased costs post decline in gaming, and decreased discretionary spending.
Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to develop play, active recreation and sport as a positive pre-treatment focus in NZ’s future public health system.
Societal resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID-19 strengthens desire to live, work, play and support others within local communities.
Expectation inflation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expectation that sport and recreation organisations receiving public money must act in a socially responsible manner. E.g. pay a living wage, greater sick leave provisions.
New global health agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of sport may take on heightened importance with Min Foreign Affairs and Trade to support East/West relationships and cooperation.
Transformed work will reshape leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for sport and recreation to be flexible and adaptable to changing tempo of people’s lives.
Mobility and proximity behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced demand for physical contact sports – rugby, netball; increased demand for non-contact sports – cricket, tennis etc.• Decline in fan base for some codes – nervousness about being in crowds.
Media and broadcasting take hit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significantly reduced sports media during crisis unlikely to return at same level. Does this impact promotion of sport with flow-on impact on participation?• Broadcasters will return, but under what revised model and with what implications? E.g. decline in available sport product. Is this the entry time into sports broadcasting for Google, Apple or Netflix?

Assumed crisis trajectory

It is unusual to be able to define such a definitive change in era. Still, it's clear the pandemic will redefine societal priorities and policies to the extent what was previously labelled impractical becomes eminently possible.

What's changing?

It could be tempting to view the end of the lock-down period as a return to some form of normality. The changing patterns of human movement, societal control and financial stress make this an unrealistic scenario in the next 12-18 months.

New Zealand is in an 'excellent position' to stop virus spread (stuff.co.nz), but could be facing up to 18 months of social isolation if COVID-19 takes hold in this country. rnz.co.nz

NZ's combined strategy of successful suppression, strong border measures, and widespread contact tracing and testing, resulting in containment could allow periods when control measures can be relaxed, but only if we reduce cases to a handful. tepunahamatatini.ac.nz

This is the 'Hammer Strategy' (see: *The Hammer & the Dance* medium.com) which will buy time ahead of vaccine development and/or broader immunity being established.

New Zealand will need to create a new normal through active community dialogue beyond the traditional political cycle as the pandemic management plays out over the next couple of years.

How will sport and active recreation advocates support this discussion?

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- To champion an agenda for physical activity through PARS, we need to be at the table, (with other Ministries, particularly Health, Education, HPA... demonstrating knowledge, connections and ability to influence physical activity. COVID-19 will create an environment where physical activity is more important than ever before – for population health and resilience.
- We need to be at the table with local government.
- May result in resurgence of doping given postponement of all testing.
- Can we raise the profile and application of Te Ao Māori frameworks and narratives that champion holistic wellbeing?
- Who can we learn from that already has models for integrating PARS activity into daily life more than in NZ, tapping research, study visits and relationships already established? E.g. Denmark, Wales, etc.

Longer term uncertainties

The establishment of immunity and the effectiveness of national strategies are the uncertainties that will determine the extent of future movement both domestically and internationally.

What's changing?

Vaccines and immunity

Vaccine development is a critical determinant of a return to 'normality' and given the broader shock to global society it is likely that the public sector takes a far more active and direct responsibility for the development and manufacture of medicines.

While new vaccines are being frantically developed (e.g. RNA vaccines theatlantic.com) the reality is that these will be unavailable at scale in the short term. Social distancing could be here to stay for a while.

Informed observers are clear (e.g. here a former US CDC Director edition.cnn.com) that the pandemic response will be protracted with ongoing suppression of episodic outbreaks. It will also have to address extensive risks to societal continuity, including health care for people with pre-existing medical needs and the vulnerability of the supply chain for medicines and supplies.

The crisis also points to the need for greater vaccine development before, not after, outbreaks occur. Even if a coronavirus vaccine were available today, demand would almost certainly outstrip supply and be unevenly distributed to those who could afford it rather than those most at risk. fortune.com

Absent of a vaccine breakthrough, countries will need to constrain travel either globally, or on a bilateral basis as respective jurisdictions get the outbreak under control. As long as the virus persists somewhere, there's a chance that one infected traveller will reignite fresh sparks in countries that have already extinguished their fires. Under these conditions, there are three possible endgames: one that's very unlikely, one that's very dangerous, and one that's very long. theatlantic.com

Managing sporting links and events will prove an ongoing challenge.

COVID-20,21...2X

While COVID-19 is an unprecedented pandemic, it is unlikely to be the last as the climate changes and impacts ecosystem structure and function. We can, therefore, anticipate an increasing level of complexity both for reactive and strategic plans.

The 2016 anthrax outbreak was a previous example of emerging zoonotic diseases that are expected to be particularly vulnerable to climate and biodiversity disturbance. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Climate change will exacerbate disease trends and modelling suggests that rising temperatures will help mosquitoes infect millions more people. popsci.com

This coronavirus is not a 'black swan' in that the emergence of another coronavirus was predicted by many working in the emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) field. jfsdigital.org

The current pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of particular groups, and future virus outbreaks will be even more challenging as they coincide with current negative health trends (e.g. diabetes and obesity). Of particular relevance for coronavirus is the WHO's projection that

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a progressive and life-threatening respiratory illness without a cure) will become the third leading cause of death worldwide by 2030. [investegate.co.uk](https://www.investegate.co.uk)

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Organisations and individuals need to learn the implications of the current emergency and invest in new capabilities for future resilience and agility.
- Personal safety may become a determinant for whether people engage in team activities, what teams they join and whether they volunteer. i.e. Irrespective of the presence of a COVID-19 vaccine, people now understand the implications of zoonotic diseases or diseases caused by bacteria, viruses or parasites and a percentage will change behaviour to reduce personal risk from close contact with others.
- Electronic gaming will continue to rise in popularity, as will individual pursuits over team sports (which have long been the cultural spine of sport in NZ).
- Disruption to competitions as we move between Alert Risk Levels will impact motivation for young people especially, to commit.
- Opportunity to design a system that gives local physical activity a higher status – promoting connectedness, opportunities, ease and cost – one that is less about competitiveness.
- Increased attention to health and safety regulations based on good public health practices: e.g. Our sector will need to adapt to increased demands for sanitation (soap in facility washrooms, increased cleaning regimes, disinfecting), ‘surveillance’ for contact tracing (knowing who turned up for club practice, attendance records, roll calls, CRM systems), health monitoring (temperature checks, vaccine certification as a condition of enrolment, regular testing).
- Turning up ‘sick’ for organised activities (schools, sports clubs, recreation groups) will be actively discouraged, and could lead to bullying, naming and shaming behaviour.
- Will it be worth the effort to organise sport given the anticipated ongoing disruption and extra effort required?
- Public facilities (pools, playgrounds) may have to restrict numbers of visitors, set different hours for vulnerable groups.

Financial impact

What’s changing?

The cautious optimism of economic commentators observed in January has evaporated and Credit Suisse notes that “economic data in the near future will be not just bad but unrecognizable” ([nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)). Beyond initial health concerns, the financial challenge will be likely be intense for the next decade if the previous GFC-experience is repeated.

In their review of COVID-19’s implications for business, McKinsey suggests that being optimistic about demand recovery is a real problem, especially for stressed organisations. They argue it’s now essential to face the possibility of a deep, protracted downturn. [mckinsey.com](https://www.mckinsey.com)

The bleak economic reality for the foreseeable future is that when the virus recedes, we may experience a depression (vox.com). Until it is safe to return to normal business – and crucially until we feel safe – we will not see much recovery. But importantly, until we can say the same about other major nations, we will not see the global economy recover.

theguardian.com

Preliminary forecasts from the International Labour Organisation indicate 25 million jobs could be lost worldwide as a result of COVID-19 (ilo.org). New Zealand is expected to lose 200,000 jobs, with the unemployment rate climbing to 10%.

This recession will prove very difficult to fight, as it affects both demand and supply. The epidemic has already led to shortages of [drugs](#), industrial [chemicals](#), medical [equipment](#), and consumer [goods](#) as Chinese factory closures disrupt complex trade networks. Quarantine efforts will disrupt the supply of human labour too. This situation will likely be ongoing and vary as economies lift and then reimpose restrictions to manage recurrent outbreaks. theatlantic.com

Overall economic estimates of the likely global impact vary dramatically with the [Asian Development Bank releasing scenarios](#) of losses from \$77 billion to \$347 billion and the [OECD](#) projecting a halving of global economic growth. New Zealand GDP is expected to drop by 10% in 2020.

While the numbers above are speculative, it's already clear that the economic impacts of COVID will be increasingly severe and traditional income sources for all individuals and organisations will come under unprecedented pressure. It will likely take a number of years for spending on discretionary items like sport and recreational participation to reach previous levels as all sectors of the New Zealand economy come under pressure.

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Loss of funding for community sport and recreation groups, as funders direct their efforts toward 'community at risk' projects that are also struggling for funds e.g. vulnerable children.
- Return to local and voluntary run sector requires us to actively support and champion volunteers as coaches, administrators etc.
- Drop in paid participation from those unable to afford entry – primarily sport related.
- This increases inequity for marginal groups and puts pressure on Sport NZ to prioritise financial support for activities that reach disadvantaged communities.
- Greater demand for quality service, given more pressure on discretionary spend.
- Paired back and simplified competitive sport sector model with national and regional layers trimmed.
- Professional sports salaries reduced, notably in NZ, with loss of players to those overseas leagues offering bet wage. Impact most noticeable on rugby.

Wider societal wellbeing

Supporting mental health will become a critical issue beyond the initial physical health challenges and ongoing community resilience will come to the fore.

What's changing?

Avoiding the mental health pandemic

There is poor mental health within some community sectors both in New Zealand ([mentalhealth.inquiry.govt.nz](https://www.mentalhealth.govt.nz)) and internationally. The WHO had a particularly blunt assessment that "stress is the health epidemic of the 21st century" ([workdesign.com](https://www.workdesign.com)). COVID will place further pressure on mental health statistics.

Several commentators fear that once infections begin ebbing, a secondary pandemic of mental-health problems will follow. It's easy to see how this may eventuate with elderly people, already experiencing an epidemic of loneliness ([weforum.org](https://www.weforum.org)), being asked to distance themselves even further.

Evidence is emerging from China of the impact long bouts of quarantine has had on some individuals. One psychologist observed that "my colleagues in Wuhan note that some people there now refuse to leave their homes and have developed agoraphobia." [theatlantic.com](https://www.theatlantic.com)

The evidence from the previous SARS outbreak suggests front-line health staff will also require longer term support. Studies note that a couple of years after SARS hit Toronto, [people who dealt with the outbreak](#) were still less productive and more likely to be experiencing burnout and post-traumatic stress.

[ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

The mental health of younger people with financial concerns, minorities experiencing racism or partners quarantined in abusive relationships are just a few examples of groups under more significant pressure through the pandemic. For people with pre-existing mental health conditions, a pandemic can [further heighten](#) their anxious thoughts and compulsive behaviours. Disrupted support systems and social isolation can leave people with mental health conditions, [especially vulnerable](#) to acute stress reactions in an epidemic. [scientificamerican.com](https://www.scientificamerican.com)

There is an opportunity to develop active recreation as a pre-treatment focus in NZ's future public health system. The primary health system was already likely to experience increasing pressure through the growing demands of an ageing population. The pandemic is likely to bring increased focus on population wellbeing and sport and recreation will need to consider new strategies to deliver on this goal. [berl.co.nz](https://www.berl.co.nz)

Building deeper societal resilience

The pandemic presents a potential break point in societal thinking that could reduce the last few decades' market orientation and individualism. Optimistic forecasts suggest that as people explore new ways to connect and support each other in adversity they'll become newly conscious of interdependency and community. Experience to date in New Zealand suggests this is a real possibility; what needs to happen to make it an ongoing reality?

Getting through coronavirus will be an exercise not just in building societal resilience, but relearning the values of cooperation, compassion, generosity and kindness, and building systems which institutionalize these values. Sport and active recreation can foster many of these traits.

[medium.com - Sect. 4.2 of article](#)

Beyond NZ, a clear choice faces the international community; will continue down the route of disunity, or adopt a path of global solidarity? If we choose disunity, this will not only prolong the crisis but exacerbate future catastrophes too. If we choose global solidarity, it will be a victory not only against the coronavirus but against future crises likely to assail humankind in the 21st century. [ft.com](#)

The crisis may have the effect of illuminating pre-existing economic inequalities and power structures. These tensions will likely reinforce the government's focus on delivering its wellbeing economy agenda instead of reverting to the same old structures: building back better rather than returning to business as usual. The initial innovative financial response may be followed by significant social policy innovations too.

[bellacaledonia.org.uk](#)

It's a given that active recreation has a role to play in developing societal resilience. The challenge lies in creating unprecedented strategic innovations that advance policy thinking beyond previous constraints to ensure maximum engagement across all groups.

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- There is an opportunity to develop PARS as a positive pre-treatment focus in NZ's future public health system.
- Strong positioning of our well-being value proposition across government, will shift the narrative from sport to physical activity. This will resonate particularly for a centre left government.
- Could be less about new ideas and more about a return to the past, adapted to suit today (old shit done better) – focus on grass-root activities, staying local, volunteer networks, neighbourhood games, play streets...
- COVID-19 strengthens desire to live, work, play and support others within local communities.
- Social resilience argument has been driven through connection that sport enables. How will this be balanced with the new social distancing concerns?

Globalisation

The pandemics brutally exposed the lack of global political cohesion and will likely advance the re-alignment of regional powers as countries firstly overcome the crisis within their borders and then align with partners who have been similarly successful. Developing and maintaining sporting relationships will be challenging, but increasingly important, if isolationist strategies become more widely adopted.

What's changing?

Stoking fear of the other

The origination of COVID-19 has played into global populist sentiment that has largely been absent within New Zealand, though unfortunately racism is not.

The spread of coronavirus has unleashed a wave of panic and, in some cases, outright anti-Chinese sentiment across the globe ([orlandosentinel.com](https://www.orlandosentinel.com)) Chinese tourists in particular have found themselves unwelcome due to coronavirus fears. [japantimes.co.jp](https://www.japantimes.co.jp)

Fear of coronavirus has exposed latent racist within New Zealand ([auckland.ac.nz](https://www.auckland.ac.nz)) with tourists and students facing increasing discrimination. [universityworldnews.com](https://www.universityworldnews.com)

A sad irony is that foreign workers in China are now experiencing discrimination as that country gets the pandemic under control and looks to bar external re-infection ([sixthtone.com](https://www.sixthtone.com)). It's likely this dynamic will be seen in many countries as the virus ebbs and flows over coming months and years.

An ongoing problem made worse through the pandemic, but pointing to the need for all sectors, including sport and recreation, to redouble efforts to ensure inclusion. This will be increasingly important in a fragmenting world where incidents of discrimination have implications for global relationships.

Trade Agreements giving way to Health Agreements

The coronavirus crisis is likely to have a lasting impact through disruption of international supply chains, a reduction in the hypermobility of global travellers, and increased protectionism and immigration controls.

The global rush to impose travel bans, additional visa requirements, and export restrictions is making economies more national and politics more nationalistic. [foreignpolicy.com](https://www.foreignpolicy.com)

Ian Goldin (Oxford professor of Globalisation & Development) notes the pandemic "...reinforces all the fears about open borders [and in] North America and Europe, there is a recalibration, a wanting to engage on a more selective basis". [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

A more nuanced form of globalism could emerge from the pandemic that places as much emphasis on populations' health as trade. The World Health Organization, and the multilateralism it represents, has had its centrality restored. At the same time, the crisis has also involved the comeback of the nation-state. The crisis demonstrates that there is no implicit or explicit contrast between these two forms of government. They go hand in hand. [theglobalist.com](https://www.theglobalist.com)

The most significant long-term geopolitical changes may occur through the interrelationship of the pandemic event and the emergent “fourth industrial revolution”. Technologies like AI and 3D printing could erode the cost advantages of widely distributed supply chains and have the potential to fundamentally change the ASEAN strategic environment. scmp.com

Global and regional relationships are realigning, and sporting links will need to take these into account. Individuals who previously had vaccinations to avoid infection in a destination could in future be compelled to do so by a host country’s refusal to admit without evidence of health records to protect their population. Similarly, we may see nations building bilateral relationships on their respective abilities to maintain population health and wellbeing. The announced commitment to retaining links between Singapore and New Zealand could be a pointer to similar future agreements (beehive.govt.nz) Those who prove less capable may become more isolated as a result, and this could impact historic sporting links too.

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Risk that local efforts are exclusionary due to unconscious or real bias, comfort levels, cultural practices, social distancing reinforcing a sense of security with one’s own tribe.
- Is social bridging role of sport heightened or diminished? Increased importance for Sport NZ to drive and support diversity and inclusion as an overriding principle for funding and support.
- Are there lessons from the infectious Aids/HIV era, that can be taken and applied to anticipate potential societal responses to covid-19 and implications for PARS?
- Role of sport may take on heightened importance with Min Foreign Affairs and Trade to support East/West relationships and cooperation e.g. NZ could compete with China, Singapore, Korea to support trade relationships.
- Increased focus on local and regional competitions – cost of travel is prohibitively expensive for teams to cross long-distances.
- NZ identifies more with Asia-Pacific than the Commonwealth for sporting events.

Political leadership

In his 1981 inauguration speech, Ronald Reagan argued that “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.” The far-reaching steps taken by all governments in response to the pandemic have shattered that doctrine many followed for the last forty years and set the stage for a new era of state action.

What’s changing?

All economic bets are off

For decades, small government politicians and economists have preached the need to keep the national debt low and worries about causing inflation through government deficits. As governments face down the pandemic, many are abandoning their previous concerns about the national debt. [businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com)

The pandemic has graphically highlighted evidence that a functioning government is crucial for a healthy society. The extraordinary actions being taken by governments (including New Zealand’s) is being taken as evidence that traditional economic approaches have failed and for new blueprints to be advanced. In the previous economic scan, it was anticipated that a financial stressor would usher in new economic thinking and that now seems to be occurring. [economics.com](https://www.economics.com)

The many calls (across the political spectrum) for the implementation of a universal basic income (UBI) is a clear example of emergent thinking. Most political commentators have long dismissed the concept as impractical before the crisis. It is now potentially seen as a practical policy that governments could deploy to mitigate the economic effects of the crisis ([brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu)).

UBI is also being proposed to address the challenging mental health issue noted in section IV above. [vice.com](https://www.vice.com)

Expectation inflation

While financial inflation may no longer be a current concern, the inflation of the voters’ expectations may quickly challenge political leadership. The suspension of particular rules through the crisis is leading some observers to question why they were applied to policies in the first place. Some are even suggesting that the aftermath of the coronavirus is likely to include a new political uprising—an Occupy Wall Street 2.0.

The UK governments call for Local Councils to solve the homelessness question ‘by the weekend’ provides a vivid example of apparent intractable rules being summarily dispensed with. [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

Campaigners argue that the government’s reaction to COVID-19 demonstrates what can be done to address a crisis and are anticipating a similar level of urgency to tackle an even greater challenge: climate change. [scoop.co.nz](https://www.scoop.co.nz)

The emissions reductions linked to the pandemic response will be taken as an example of what is possible if economic growth is restrained ([theconversation.com](https://www.theconversation.com)). Expect to see calls for increased social and environmental conditions attached to company financial support and a shift to post-growth economic principles. [thecorrespondent.com](https://www.thecorrespondent.com)

Others are pointing to the differences between the current pandemic response and ongoing issues like climate. They note that short-term politics and human nature shape a bias to address only what's right in front of us. [marketwatch.com](https://www.marketwatch.com)

Anticipate significant future tension between calls for a reversion to previous governance approaches and those advocating bold policy initiatives ([stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz)). It could be that the pandemic paradoxically creates both a sense of unity in response but fosters future political polarisation.

What previous orthodoxy's that restrained action on active recreation are now open to question in a post-COVID environment? Is it now possible to envisage a similar vigorous response being taken to address other issues of critical public health (e.g. the reduction in sugar consumption)?

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Experience through lockdowns of remote working and reduced commuting time, part-time and flexible working hours, flexi-time employment, etc. will continue giving people more leisure to pursue PARS activities. (c.f. Denmark)
- Recessionary demands for the introduction of UBI and shorter working weeks similarly increases leisure time.
- Expectation that any PARS organisation receiving public money must act in a socially responsible manner. E.g. pay a living wage, greater sick leave provisions...
- Changing notions of how acceptable it will be to travel extensively to play sport

Mobility and proximity behaviour

Through the pandemic, the personal has become dangerous. The comfort of being in the presence of others might be replaced by a greater comfort with absence, especially with those we don't know intimately. Instead of asking, "Is there a reason to do this online?" we may ask, "Is there any good reason to do this in person?"

What's changing?

Reduced travel horizons

Previous assumptions about the ease and cost of international movement are now upended and unlikely to return to the previous state for many years.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that industry passenger revenues could plummet \$252 billion or 44% below 2019's figure. This outcome assumes a scenario in which severe travel restrictions last for up to three months, followed by a gradual economic recovery later this year. [iata.org](https://www.iata.org)

Coronavirus could end up changing flying for ever as quarantined passengers question their need to travel once restrictions are lifted ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)). A significant number of airlines could be bankrupt by mid-2020. [edition.cnn.com](https://www.edition.cnn.com)

Airlines were already feeling under pressure (especially in Europe) from the flygskam movement ([marketwatch.com](https://www.marketwatch.com)). Recovery could be complicated by the need for more sustainable technologies and calls for growth to be limited to meet environmental concerns. [medium.com](https://www.medium.com)

Future travel is likely to be logistically and financially more challenging for both spectators and participants. While the challenge will be particularly acute for international long-haul, it can also be expected at the regional level as multiple transport providers cease to provide competitive services.

Transformed work will reshape leisure

The conversation on the 'future of work' needs to be engaged and challenged if the future of leisure is not to emerge by default. There's a symbiotic between the two and the current re-invention of work practices through the lock-down could lead to a realignment of leisure practice too.

Early 2020 might turn into a forced social experiment that could finally answer the question: Do we need rush hour anymore? Could coronavirus be the tipping point in terms of wider-spread adoption of full-time remote work? [geekwire.com](https://www.geekwire.com)

Research has previously identified there are economic benefits to remote working which may become increasingly attractive for firms in an economic downturn. For example, a Stanford study demonstrated a 13% improvement in performance from people working at home (gsb.stanford.edu). A similar Harvard study of one sector alone found the productivity gain could add \$1.3 billion of value to the US economy each year. [hbswk.hbs.edu](https://www.hbswk.hbs.edu)

Longer term, if the work environment remains radically reshaped, it could transform urban life and reshape the way towns and cities are planned. [theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

A fundamental reshaping of the work environment has significant implications for the pursuit of active leisure. Will gym memberships be renewed if the worker is no longer attending the office nearby? Will workplace-aligned teams still meet for the lunchtime 5-a-side? Will team sport survive in a world of the net-connected remote worker, or will they experience a renaissance as people look for additional opportunities to connect? If the tempo of the working day is no longer "business hours" will individuals abandon the traditional Saturday morning exercise routine? The answers are unknown, but a fundamental reshaping of work habits will make them increasingly relevant to the future of leisure.

A virtual boom

Individuals who are either unable or unwilling to travel may be expected turn online and the current trends in esports could receive a consequent boost.

Prior to the pandemic, commentators were forecasting the global esports viewer base to grow from 355 million in 2018 to 674 million in 2022. [venturebeat.com](https://www.venturebeat.com)

The industry has already noted an uptick in interest with Verizon reporting a 75% increase in video game activity during the first week of the US quarantine. NASCAR has found a way to draw eyeballs with iRacing and replaced the television time slot of a recent cancelled race with a virtual version as drivers competed from home. [wfaa.com](https://www.wfaa.com)

It's not without challenge as while the crisis is causing a spike in short-term demand for video games and consoles, it's proving challenging for the industry to keep up. Nearly 90% of video game consoles in the U.S. were made in China. [time.com](https://www.time.com)

The challenges presented to the wider recreation sector by esports (e.g. participation rates, competitor welfare etc.) prior to the pandemic are set to increase through the effect of the crisis.

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Reduced demand for physical contact sports – rugby, netball; increased demand for non-contact sports – cricket, tennis.
- Decline in fan base for some codes – nervousness about being in crowds
- Implications for stadia, with 'white elephant' status becoming greater issue for debt conscious Councils.
- Expectation that PARS organisations and activities act in an environmentally sustainable way – e.g. requirement to measure and report carbon footprint, stricter financial policies (reduced travel allowances, fewer conferences attended in person).
- Travel constrained by introduction of MFAT Covid travel advisory.
- Trans-Tasman competitions on ice for 18 months or longer e.g. Super Rugby, A-League.
- Implications for New Zealand's attractiveness as a host nation for sporting events given geographic distance (risk of reinfection, reluctance to travel).
- Increased interest and support for national active recreation events, e.g. running, mountain-biking, triathlons etc.
- Need for sport and rec to be flexible and adaptable to changing tempo of people's lives.

Impact on sport and recreation

What's changing?

Tough financially in the short term

As global habits change to adapt to the new realities of the outbreak, consumer spending also appears likely to fall, and the impacts will have far-reaching effects on the media, sports and entertainment industries.

weforum.org

The betting industry has been a high-profile casualty of the current crisis coming as it did on pre-existing business challenges. The cancellation of sporting events will likely cost the TAB \$14 million and that, along with a \$3.8 million error over bonus bets will result in both the half year and full year projections taking a big hit. stuff.co.nz

Media too is coming under further financial pressure as funds from advertisers drop off. This could be felt especially acutely in small remote markets like New Zealand. One veteran media executive noted that with big advertising accounts run out of Sydney, Singapore or Hong Kong "...it's just really easy to cut New Zealand." thespinoff.co.nz

Concerns are starting to emerge that beyond the initial sport hiatus, harsh economic realities may force sponsors, broadcasters and sporting bodies into legal confrontations as respective parties look to maximise their long-term position. controlrisks.com, dailymaverick.co.za

Implications for play, active recreation and sport

- Class 4 funding of \$150m that has sustained community sport and recreation for 20+ years may cease, or at least be significantly reduce, requiring immediate rethink on how community sport and recreation can be supported and what can be sacrificed
- Significantly reduced sports media during crisis unlikely to return at same level. Does this impact promotion of sport with flow-on impact on participation?
- Broadcasters will return, but under what revised model and with what implications? Is this the entry time into sports broadcasting for Google, Apple or Netflix?