

Innovation Partnership

FELLOWSHIP SUMMARY PAPER



Digital Inclusion in New Zealand

A CALL TO ACTION

About this Report

This study into Digital Inclusion was carried out by Ms. Catherine Soper for the **Innovation Partnership** in 2016, co-funded by a Google Fellowship. The full report, *Digital Inclusion in New Zealand: Assessing Government policy approaches and initiatives*, reviews a range of digital inclusion strategies in the United Kingdom, Finland, Singapore and Australia, and identifies lessons for New Zealand. To request a full version of the report contact www.innovationpartnership.co.nz.

MEET THE AUTHOR



Ms. Soper is a policy analyst who is currently working for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Catherine's Report emphasises the need for digital inclusion for all New Zealanders, and highlights the importance of policies and actions that promote digital literacy across the population.



"The challenge now for all New Zealanders is to gain the skills and confidence to fully participate as digitally-enabled citizens."

In a digitally-enabled world we all need the skills to participate

Digital technology is transforming the way New Zealanders live, learn and work. Access to technology and digital skills have become increasingly essential for people to fully participate in society.

As traditional face-to-face services such as banking, insurance assessments, health assessments, and job applications are replaced by automated or online applications, individuals require not only access to the internet but also the skills and confidence to use these services.

Those who are least able to connect are at risk of becoming increasingly disadvantaged – they are less employable, have fewer opportunities to access online government, education or business services, and miss chances to communicate with friends and family.

Digital inclusion is about ensuring all citizens have the right access, skills, motivation and trust to confidently go online.

What is digital inclusion?

Digital inclusion is about ensuring all citizens have the right access, skills, motivation and trust to confidently go online. It's also about empowering our businesses to flourish in the digital economy. Research shows that companies that make effective use of Internet services are 6% more productive than average firms in their sector.¹



1. Glass, Hayden and Davies, Preston and Hefter, Eli and Blick, Gary (2014). The Value of Internet Services to New Zealand Businesses.



WHO IS MISSING OUT?

New Zealanders have been enthusiastic adopters of digital technologies. Over 90% of Kiwis use the Internet and five out of six of us spend at least half an hour online every day. That's good news.

However, Internet use is not equal across our population and substantial numbers of New Zealanders are still missing out. For example, research shows that young, well-educated people in urban areas tend to use the Internet more, and that people in low socio-economic and rural areas are more likely to be digitally excluded.

There have been many strategies and reports over the last 20 years aimed at digitally-enabling those who are missing out, and some progress has been achieved, but significant barriers remain and further actions are needed.





Groups least likely to be connected in New Zealand

Māori and Pacific peoples
those on low incomes
sole parents
older people
people with low or no qualifications or poor literacy
the unemployed and underemployed
rural-dwellers
women and girls
people with disabilities

2001: groups least likely to be connected (source: Department of Labour)

Ms. Soper found that there are indications of improvement for some groups; however the continuous gathering of clear, longitudinal data on who is excluded is the first step in designing initiatives that will help improve digital inclusion. It will also help us to understand which initiatives were most effective.

What are the barriers to digital inclusion?

The UK's Digital Inclusion Strategy neatly summarises these and reinforces that access is just one of the challenges to inclusion. Ms. Soper's study suggests New Zealanders will face many of the same challenges to inclusion.

Major challenges to going online

Access	Skills	Motivation	Trust
Accessibility	Literacy skills	Risks	Identity
Location	Digital skills	Necessity	Security
Cost	Security skills	Financial benefits	Standards
Technology	Confidence	Social benefits	Reputation
Infrastructure		Health and wellbeing benefits	
Language			

Becoming digitally-enabled citizens

Many New Zealanders will be familiar with the term 'digital divide' – the gap between those who can access digital technologies and those who can't. New Zealand has made good progress bridging the digital divide and over the last decade access to ICT has become more widespread and affordable. 98% of New Zealanders now enjoy affordable broadband, paying less than 5% of their monthly income.²

However, access and affordability are just the first steps to digital inclusion. The challenge now for all New Zealanders is to gain the skills and confidence to fully participate as digitally-enabled citizens. Achieving this goal will provide significant

economic and social benefits for individuals and the country. Overseas studies suggest that the ability to shop online and research prices might save an average Kiwi household up to \$1,000 a year. And if all businesses made better use of Internet services, it could potentially lift our GDP by \$34 billion!³

“Promoting the benefits of going online and being digital ... will open up the digital economy to individuals who may never have considered themselves capable of participating.”

2. A threshold set by the Broadband Commission which was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO.

3. Glass, Hayden and Davies, Preston and Hefter, Eli and Blick, Gary (2014). The Value of Internet Services to New Zealand Businesses.

Key features of digital inclusion

Digital inclusion is about enabling access and building people's skills, motivation and confidence to use digital technologies. This will help them overcome barriers to social and economic exclusion. To build a digitally inclusive New Zealand, we need everyone to:



have access to affordable broadband and devices



have the motivation, skills, confidence and trust to use the Internet



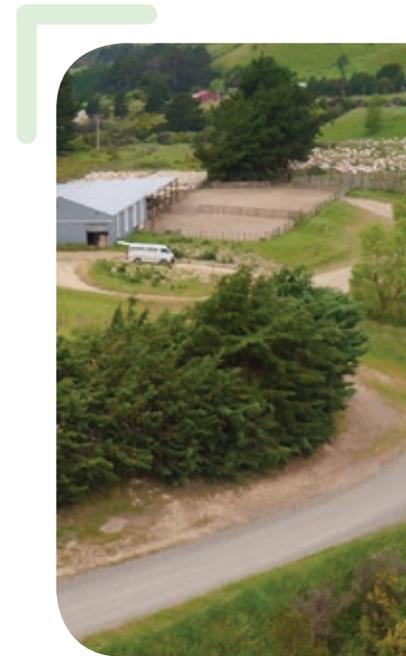
be able to use technology to improve their quality of life.

What are other countries doing?

Ms. Soper's study looks at digital economy/digital inclusion initiatives underway in four other countries – Singapore, United Kingdom, Australia and Finland. Each of these countries is taking the issue of digital inclusion and digital upskilling seriously, and each country offers learning opportunities for people of all ages to acquire digital skills.

The United Kingdom has an impressive Digital Inclusion Strategy which aims to halve the number of people who lack basic digital skills to less than 10% of the adult population by 2020. In Finland, access to digital skills and technology has been enshrined as a fundamental human right, like food, clothing and shelter. Singapore promotes a vision of itself as a Smart Nation 'where people are empowered by technology to lead meaningful and fulfilled lives'. Australia has a number of initiatives to develop core digital skills, including Broadband for Seniors which has already helped over 650,000 seniors since 2008. A Digital Inclusion Index has also been developed in Australia by Telstra and others, which creates a baseline measure for understanding who in Australia is being excluded.

Ms. Soper concludes that over the years New Zealand has been inconsistent in its approach to digital inclusion. The Report suggests it is time now for greater Government commitment and leadership to "ensure New Zealanders have the skills required to fully participate and benefit in a digital economy."





Call To Action. What needs to happen in New Zealand?

At the time of this study the New Zealand Government's vision/goal was: "Ensuring all New Zealanders can fully participate in the digital world to realise the educational, economic and social benefits of ICT." (MBIE 2016)

To achieve this, Ms. Soper's recommendations are that:

- » Government should lead some digital inclusion initiatives but also work with others (industry, community, educators, NGOs etc.) to enable effective delivery of specific programmes.
- » Government should lead the development of good data that defines digital exclusion, provides clear indicators and measures, enables the development of targeted initiatives, and ensures we can monitor change.
- » New Zealand needs well-targeted, practical initiatives, with clear, measurable goals meeting the needs of different groups.
- » there needs to be better access to digital skills development throughout a person's life. We need a digital competence framework that maps out minimum digital skills and defines what digital skills look like at different stages of life.
- » successful initiatives are more likely to be collaborative and community-led, so they meet local needs. 'Top-down', nationwide initiatives are less likely to be effective.
- » digital champions, in Government, in industry and from the community, will play an important role in highlighting the opportunities digital technology offers and encouraging people to improve their skills.



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