

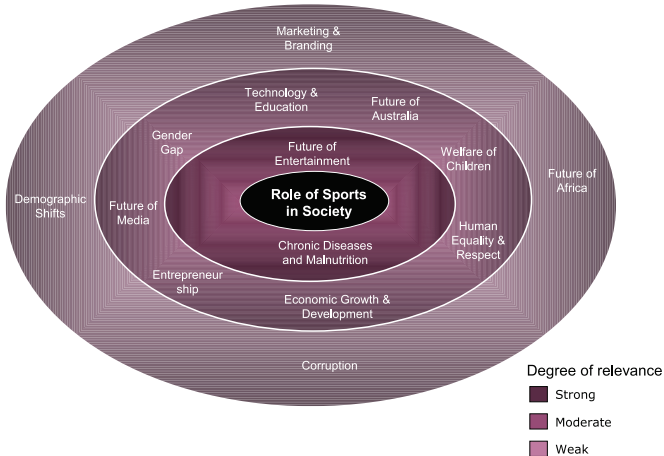
Role of Sports in Society

A. Description of the issue

The role of sport in society has been debated for many decades. Sport is a part of society as both an educational fixture and an entertainment enterprise. Sport forms part of human and social development; it can contribute to social cohesion, tolerance and integration and is an effective channel for physical and socio-economic development. As a universal language, sport can be a powerful medium for social and economic change: it can be utilized to bridge cultural gaps, resolve conflict and educate people in ways that very few activities can.



The goal of the Sports Council is to examine the proposition that sport can be a powerful agent for change that should be leveraged by individuals, businesses, governments and elite athletes to drive significant positive development and progress in a social, economic and political context.



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B. Dimensions

- **Value of sport:** Sport is a means of exchange and understanding among people of various backgrounds, nationalities or beliefs, and promotes expression beyond traditional barriers. The rules of the game transcend differences and inequality and help redefine success and performance. Through sport, people identify new role models in society.
- **Sport demographics and health:** Physical activity has a crucial social impact on society's health and well-being as well as healthcare costs. A connection also exists between being physically active and living a healthy lifestyle. But as the Western world grows older, sport must reinvent itself to deal with this demographic shift.
- **Sport and education:** Sport provides not only health benefits for young participants but also instils qualities such as team work, discipline and a competitive spirit that prove valuable in adulthood. It therefore warrants a prominent place in the educational system.
- **Sport and politics:** Sport and politics often go hand-in-hand. Events such as football matches and the Olympic Games can be vehicles for improving understanding between countries.
- **Sport and economic development:** Sport can contribute to economic development by creating additional sources of income including the manufacture of sporting goods, the development of sport-related services and infrastructure or the hosting of sports events. Is government policy needed to elevate the importance of sport? How much investment can developing countries justify to promote sport, compared to other urgent social programmes?
- **International trade in sporting goods:** Of concern in the past decade have been the relocation of production in developing countries, their specialization in the production of low cost sporting products or poor working conditions in the sporting goods industry – particularly the issue of child labour.
- **Sport and social entrepreneurship:** An opportunity to build sport social entrepreneurship that fuels both social change and job creation exists. This can be driven primarily through the emerging hybrid of entrepreneurship and the NGO movement.
- **Dark side of sport:** The increasing monetary and partisan nature of sport means that it can potentially give rise to violent and illegal activity or transactions that may not be in a community's interest. Examples include violence between athletes or spectators, the use of performance enhancing drugs, or the bribery and ownership of clubs by individuals who are motivated by non-sporting factors.