



IFTF FAST FUTURES | HABIT WORKSHEET

Drivers of Change

New to foresight practice? Here's some advice from the Institute for the Future's Foresight Essentials team for how to get started with "drivers of change."

1 | Know what a driver of change is.

What's a driver of change? It's a significant trend or phenomenon that's likely to make a disruptive or transformative impact on society. Drivers of change take many forms, such as:

- a quickly advancing area of **scientific research**, like artificial intelligence or human genetic modification (CRISPR)
- a shift in **consumer behavior**, like the rise of plant-based diets
- a new **technology** entering the mainstream, like Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies
- a **social movement**, like Black Lives Matter
- an increasingly popular **policy idea**, like lowering the voting age to 16
- a **growing threat** documented by experts and researchers, like sea level rise from climate change or the impact of noise pollution on mental health
- a major **demographic shift**, like the "youth boom" in Africa, where most countries now have an average age of 15-18 years old, compared to an average age of 38 in the United States, 39 in China, and 40 in the United Kingdom
- a long-term **regulatory effort**, like governments attempting to limit the power and monopoly of tech companies
- a **widespread cultural change**, like the decline of marriage rates, which have fallen in 4 out of 5 of countries worldwide, by an average of 34% over the past 50 years

2 | Make a list of your top drivers of change.

Which drivers will have the most impact on *your* industry, workplace, community, nation, or family over the next decade? Pick 6-7 top drivers of change.

This Habit Worksheet includes a list of some of the drivers of change that we're tracking at the Institute for the Future; you may want to choose from this list. Or, see what others are saying. Try an Internet search for "drivers of change" and whatever you're interested in: learning, food, democracy, California, religion, etc. You'll likely find future forecasts, trend reports, and research to inspire your thinking.

If you're exploring drivers with a team or a group, ask everyone to make their own lists. Look for similarities and outliers, and come up with a shared list that everyone agrees on.

3 | Start tracking these drivers of change.

Make it a habit or formal practice to update your knowledge about these drivers. At a minimum, once a month, pick one of your drivers and do an Internet search to find one news story, video, podcast, or research article related to the driver. You can put a recurring appointment on your calendar, or set up a monthly hangout to track drivers with a team or group. For example: Make the last Friday of each month Drivers Day. Have everyone bring one story or resource about a driver of change to share with the group, to expand your collective intelligence about why it matters.

4 | Look for risks and opportunities of each driver of change.

Drivers of change are complicated. They bring the potential for new problems as well as new solutions. So bring a balanced mindset as you explore your top drivers. A practical way to do this is by searching the Internet and social media, using a carefully crafted set of search terms to reveal both risks and opportunities.

For example, combine your driver of change – facial recognition, mRNA vaccines, universal basic income, aging populations, etc. – with each of these terms:

Benefits, risks, long-term impacts, recent advances, breakthrough, ethics, regulation, dilemma, challenges, opportunities, new study, new application, unexpected, unintended, long-term forecast, future predictions, obstacles, problems, solutions.

This set of terms can help you expand your understanding of any driver of change, and stay up-to-date on how the driver is evolving and already impacting society.

Suggested Drivers of Change

These are some of the drivers of change we're tracking at the Institute for the Future. If there's something on the list you haven't heard of or don't know much about, do a quick Internet search! Try searching for it alongside your future topic or community (learning, food, democracy, California, religion) and see if anyone has connected the dots in an interesting way.

- The climate crisis and climate mitigation efforts
- The global switch to renewable energy sources
- The pandemic and its long-term impacts
- Increasing economic inequality
- Automation of work
- Genomic research and CRISPR genetic modification
- Social and political tensions caused by refugee crises and mass migration
- Decreasing birth rates in Western countries, and a “youth boom” in Africa
- Digital currencies, cryptocurrency, and programmable money
- Alternatives to capitalism and market-based economies
- Shifting religious majorities and increasing theological diversity
- Social media driven misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories
- Rise of authoritarianism and loss of faith in democracy
- Widespread adoption of facial recognition and surveillance technologies
- Universal Basic Income and direct cash transfers
- Internet shutdowns mandated by government or law enforcement
- Lifelong learning and “reskilling” at the workplace
- Regenerative design and the Circular Economy
- The Internet of Things
- Augmented Reality
- Virtual Reality
- Smart Cities infrastructure
- Satellite Networks and the Space Internet

This is a fast introduction to drivers of change. You can develop your skills much further: Learn how to identify, analyze, interpret, and combine drivers of change into “future forces” and forecasts with Institute for the Future’s Foresight Essentials in-person and online trainings. For more information, visit: [IFTF.org/foresightessentials](https://iftf.org/foresightessentials).