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Is your country **preparing for** *the future?*

What will you be doing in 5 years’ time? If you’ve hacked life and made yourself a solid 5-year plan, you can probably answer that question easily. Planning for the future is something that governments of countries around the world ponder over every year. While some create 4-5-year plans according to presidential terms, others create 10-, 20-, 50- and even 100-year plans that think long-term. But just how prepared are they, should disaster strike?

Fast forward to the future 

The countries of the future

We examined some of the major countries in the world against two factors. How prepared they are for the near future (say, the next 10-20 years), and how they might handle unforeseen events.

The table below is split accordingly. You can either filter by the blue metrics for near-future preparedness, or filter by the scarier purple ones. Those look at doomsday scenarios from extreme weather and food scarcity to global recessions. Yikes.

METRICS:

CURRENT PREPAREDNESS

POTENTIAL FUTURE EVENTS

- Infrastructure

Communication & Technology

Ennvironmental Policies
- Human Rights and Liberties

Economic Policies

Healthcare
- Cyber Warfare

Traditional Warfare

Global Peace Index
- Global Recession

Natural Resources

Climate Change
- Exteme Weather

Health Security

Phones per Person

			Current preparedness					
	Country	Total						
1	Norway	112.74	8.99	9.28	10	10	9.29	8.39
2	Canada	107.53	8.75	8.82	6.01	8.52	9.00	7.84
3	France	103.70	9.43	8.24	6.59	8.16	6.63	9.65
4	Germany	103.55	9.41	7.96	6.13	8.47	9.61	8.16
5	Australia	100.61	9.13	8.73	4.50	7.95	8.44	9.06
6	Switzerland	99.44	5.19	8.70	8.24	8.74	9.41	8.11
7	Netherlands	99.16	5.53	9.01	5.60	8.67	9.14	8.63
8	United Kingdom	98.59	9.54	9.03	6.39	8.19	8.91	8.47
9	Singapore	98.21	9.82	9.13	5.32	3.74	10.00	7.67
10	Spain	92.24	9.19	8.63	6.68	7.70	3.14	9.24

Check all 30 countries

Are the countries structurally sound?

Preparing for the future means getting the basics in place first. Our Infrastructure and Communication and Technology metrics look at factors like ease of transport, how much (or how little, as the case may be) countries are investing in their infrastructure, and access to 5G, mobile phones, the internet and social media. So, which countries have what they need to expand their land, ease movement and get connected?

Singapore comes top for investing in infrastructure, and Norway and France respectively follow close behind. From our 30 countries where data was available, the USA scores lowest with China second-to-last. Despite being one of the global superpowers, our cousins across the pond have the biggest infrastructure investment gap in the world!

As **for comms and tech, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) takes the crown**, with South Korea and Norway in second and third place. Ethiopia scores lowest here, with India in second-to-last place and Rwanda third.

According to futurist Matthew Griffin, **we'll need to get cosy with advanced computer technology to become well prepared for the future**. "Prime examples of countries trying to shape their economies today so they can 'own' the future are China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, the UAE and others. This can be seen in Saudi Arabia's half-a-trillion-dollar smart city Meon and the fleets of robo-taxis in Dubai and Singapore."

These countries represent the quintessential 'throuple', marrying infrastructure, communication and technology.

Which countries let their policies do the talking?

They say actions speak louder than words, but these specific words matter. Policies are the backbone of countries, and future-thinking nations would do well to focus on the environment and the economy. After all, we need a healthy planet to live on, and a healthy wallet to keep us afloat.

We looked at metrics like the availability of renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, as well as their ability to prepare their youth for the workplace, preparedness for AI, gender equality in industry and corruption.

So, which countries shine bright economically? Singapore gets the top spot, followed by Germany and Switzerland, while South America's Guyana is at the bottom of our list of 30. **As for environmental policies, Norway has a significant lead**, with Switzerland in second place and Brazil in third. Why do Brazil score so well? Their high level of renewable energy gives them a significant boost on the environmental front. **At the bottom of the scale is the UAE, scoring low because of its poor outdoor air quality.**

Matthew notes that "most government strategy and investment cycles span decades, which means they have to do their best to envision the deep future, with the future of education, jobs, and skills being a prime example, as well as the future of communications, energy, healthcare, infrastructure, and mobility." Okay, that's a lot of balls in the air!

Do countries even care?

We've paid a lot of lip service to the fundamentals that make up a country, but you can't have a country without people (go ahead, prove us wrong). So, how do countries stack up in their support for their citizens?

Our human rights and liberties metrics looked at inclusiveness and religious tolerance, access to basic education, personal (political) freedom, censorship and healthcare. **Norway gets first place once again, scoring top marks for all but one of our metrics.** For healthcare, South Korea is miles ahead, while France and Japan follow.

While the human touch can't fail to give us that fuzzy feeling, it's not to say that machines have no place in humanity. Matthew says **"Creative Machines"** – or the combination of AI-fuelled platforms and simulated environments – **can help innovate new products and health treatments in real time.**

"Think we live in an on-demand world today? You'll be amazed by what we might achieve in the future."

Prepare for global conflict

As a futurist, Matthew is used to thinking about warfare. He sees it taking two major forms in the future – cyber warfare in our computers and connected devices – and traditional warfare.

"No country can survive a nuclear-style war," he says. Most experts agree that if we do have another major world war, nuclear weapons *would* be involved (hence that column of zeroes above!)

So, what about cyber warfare? Matthew says "new and emerging exponential technologies are more accessible, democratised, global and powerful than ever. It's a great opportunity to collaborate on a worldwide scale, but there is a dark side.

"Nefarious individuals can use them to create powerful apocalyptic weapons platforms that can cause huge suffering at a speed and scale unlike anything we've ever seen before. We're massively underprepared for what I call 'sentient AIs and robo-hackers'."

To survive the cyber battle, countries need to take robust cyber security measures. According to Comparitech, **Germany are leading the way here**, with Japan, Canada and the UK also holding strong. And if war does break out, you might want to seek solace in **the world's most peaceful countries. Canada, Singapore and Japan are top contenders** for this. We've suddenly got a hankering for maple syrup...

Let's think economically

"It's ironic," says Matthew. "The more economically mature a country is, the more likely it is that its own futuristic ambitions are outshone by others." Potentially, countries that think their economies had good form in the past might be less likely to take steps to keep it protected in the long term.

This could be why countries like **Bangladesh, China, Côte d'Ivoire and Indonesia** are all predicted to **come out of the Great Lockdown Recession of 2020 the strongest**, while countries with higher GDPs like the USA and UK languor in the middle.

Another aspect that helps bolster an economy is a country's ability to be self-sustaining. If a post-apocalyptic world sees all trade routes cut off, which countries will survive? According to the Global Food Security Index, **famously neutral Switzerland is the best** from our list of countries. Turns out *après ski* doubles as survival camp. Who knew?

Shield the world, make it a better place

"Climate change is one of humanity's greatest challenges," says Matthew. Countries that can ensure their climate game is strong will be better prepared for the future.

Germanwatch's Climate Risk Index for 1998-2018 looked at how well countries bounced back after natural and environmental events over a 20-year period – and gave them a score for the future. The logic being, if they did well in the past, they'll respond well to any future natural

disasters. **The island nation of Singapore comes up top here**, with the United Arab Emirates, Côte d'Ivoire and Norway following respectively. Should disaster strike, these countries will likely be better at recovering than others on our list.

Climate change is likely going to lead to weather extremes – with countries experiencing some of the hottest, coldest and most unpredictable weather in their histories. Before you run out and buy all the sunblock – or the thickest winter jacket you can get your hands on – find out if your country is at risk of extreme weather.

The World Risk Report says Saudi Arabia is least likely to be affected by extreme weather. Five countries in Europe follow, with Canada and the United States in 7th and 8th place respectively. Countries in the danger zone (climate-wise) include Nigeria, Bangladesh and Guyana.

Hypothetically, what if there's a pandemic?

We won't tell you where we got the inspiration for this metric, but we asked Matthew what futurists have to say about worldwide pandemics.

"Futurists have predicted this many times over the past two decades," he said. **"Epidemics and pandemics have become increasingly possible and plausible for many reasons**, such as humanity's continued incursion into natural spaces. When you combine a novel, contagious deadly virus with an increasingly globalised and connected society, it stands to reason that it'd spread faster than we can find a cure."

From a prediction perspective, the Global Health Security Index looks how well countries can prevent, detect and respond to global public health emergencies. We'd put money on you not guessing that **the United States comes out on top, with the UK following close behind.** Other countries with good scores include the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and South Korea.

Fortunately, as Matthew points out, **"tracking and tracing these pandemics today would be simpler than in the past.** Whether that's using real-time gene sequencing systems, smart devices or technologies such as AI and advanced manufacturing to shorten the time to design, test, and deploy vaccines." Tech to the rescue?





Expert bio

Matthew Griffin, described as "The Adviser behind the Advisers" and a "Young Kurzweil," is the founder and CEO of the World Futures Forum and the 311 Institute. The latter is a global Futures and Deep Futures consultancy working between the dates of 2020 to 2070. Matthew is an award-winning futurist, and author of the "Codex of the Future" series.

He's regularly featured in the global media, including AP, BBC, Bloomberg, CNBC, Discovery, Viacom, and WIRED. Matthew's ability to identify, track, and explain the impacts of hundreds of revolutionary emerging technologies on global culture, industry and society, is unparalleled. Recognised for the past six years as one of the world's foremost futurists, and innovation and strategy experts, Matthew is an international speaker who helps governments, investors, multinationals and regulators around the world envision, build and lead an inclusive, sustainable future.

Methodology	+
Data sources	+

Technology's playing an ever more important role in our futures – and getting yourself equipped with the best tech might help you prepare for the future too. One thing that'll take you from any ol' ordinary consumer to one who's truly in charge of your tech is comparing your providers regularly. When it comes to your mobile phone, this means checking if [Virgin Mobile Sim Only deals](#) are better than [ID Sim Only deals](#) or [Vodafone Sim Only deals](#), and making sure whichever provider you're with is giving you exactly what you need to suit your lifestyle and phone habits. You don't want to be running out of data when you're being chased by an AI robot!

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