

Network Readiness Index 2023: U.S. still #1, U.K. climbs to #10, and China among top 20 despite advanced economies leading the way in network readiness

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Monday, 20 November 2023

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The United States has taken the top position in the Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2023 (<https://networkreadinessindex.org/>), unveiled today, securing the #1 ranking for the second consecutive year.

Singapore retains its second-place position, while Finland has surged by four places to secure #3 from #7 last year. The Netherlands and Sweden have ranked fourth and fifth, respectively. The U.K, meanwhile, has climbed into the top 10, securing 10th position – up from 12th in the previous year – and China is the only upper-middle-income country in the top 20, rising to #20.

This NRI 2023, published by Portulans Institute and Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, provides a robust framework for assessing the impact of Information Communication & Technology (ICT) on society and the development of nations. It evaluates 134 economies based on 58 indicators across four dimensions of digital readiness – technology, people, governance, and impact.

This year's report, titled 'Trust in a Network Society: A crisis of the digital age?', draws attention to the potential for a serious crisis in public trust in the internet and related technologies in an increasingly interconnected world. It also highlights Africa's digital rise, with Kenya leading in inclusivity and infrastructure, while the Arab States are sharpening their focus on digital workforce skills. In Asia-Pacific, a blend of innovation and rapid adoption defines regional growth. Europe progresses steadily, with Finland as a notable exemplar of network readiness. The Americas are recognized for their varied and comprehensive digital strategies, pointing to a region embracing a holistic digital evolution.

Historically, the top 10 performers in the NRI exhibit three prominent trends: they consistently belong to high-income economies, demonstrating robust network readiness across all dimensions, and European countries continue to dominate the list. These trends continue in the NRI 2023.

Professor Soumitra Dutta, Co-founder and President of Portulans Institute, Co-editor of the NRI, and Dean of Oxford Saïd, said:

“China, an upper-middle-income economy, defies tradition by securing a spot in the NRI's top 20 due to its formidable technological prowess. But, when you look at the regional distribution of those listed within the top 10, you see that Singapore and Korea remain the only economies located in Asia and the Pacific, while the United States is the only economy located in the Americas.”

Switzerland ranked sixth (down from fifth in NRI 2022) in this year's NRI, Republic of Korea achieved

seventh place (up from #9), Denmark placed #8 (down from #6), Germany dropped to ninth place, (down one), and the U.K. ranked 10th.

Among the top 25 countries, 16 are from Europe, five are from Eastern and Southeastern Asia (including Singapore, the Republic of Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Japan), two come from Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), and two are from North America (Canada and the United States).

Of the 134 economies included within the global index – an increase from 131 in the previous year – each is assessed across certain criteria. These are categorised into four pillars: Technology, People, Governance and Impact. Each country is then given an NRI score and a corresponding rank.

The NRI 2023 report underscores digital strides in middle- and low-income nations, with India, China, and Rwanda leading the way, Africa and Asia-Pacific outperforming in governance and tech respectively, and Brazil's progress highlighting a global trend towards inclusive digital advancement.

The NRI 2023 publishes at a time characterized by dramatic technological advancement. Capturing the readiness of over 134 economies to capitalize on this widespread change, this global report provides meaningful insight for business leaders and policymakers alike.

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Reflecting on this year's NRI, Bruno Lanvin, co-editor of the NRI, said:

"You cannot improve what you cannot measure. But can you improve anything that remains imperfectly defined? As our digital world continues to evolve and shape before us, policy makers, investors, analysts, academics and ordinary citizens are often expected to make fast decisions and articulate sound assessments about rapidly changing trends and practices. The need for fact-based and quantifiable descriptions of our network societies has never been so urgent. This is an area in which, for several decades, NRI has been trying to inform the choices to be made by business, government and civil society."

Professor Dutta adds:

"Amidst rapid digital evolution, the NRI 2023 underscores the crucial role of trust and the necessity for robust governance in our network societies. Through constant refinement and integration of new metrics, we strive to accurately capture the intricate interplay of technology and society. The findings emphasize the need for stability and trust to harness technology's full potential, driving societal well-being and contributing to Sustainable Development Goals. The NRI 2023 acts as a vital compass, guiding us towards a resilient and trustworthy digital future."

Amazon Web Services (AWS) is a Knowledge Partner for the NRI, and has provided research showing how the successful adoption of cloud technology is a key marker for digital readiness and has a positive impact on innovation and the economy at large."

Tanuja Randery, Managing Director, AWS EMEA said:

“We are on a mission to put the power of cloud and artificial intelligence in the hands of customers and democratize access to innovation. While the benefits of digital transformation are already plain to see, to unlock its full potential we must build greater confidence in technologies as they evolve. We are convinced that responsibility drives trust, trust drives adoption, and adoption drives innovation. That’s why AWS is committed to collaborating with government and industry to support the safe, secure, and responsible development of technology and help unlock their digital ambitions.”

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