

Network Readiness Index 2025

With support from:



South Africa

The Network Readiness Index (NRI) is one of the leading global indices on the application and impact of information and communication technology (ICT) in economies around the world. In its latest version of 2025 the NRI Report maps the network-based readiness landscape of 127 economies based on their performances in four different pillars: Technology, People, Governance, and Impact. Each of these pillars is itself comprised of three sub-pillars (see Figure 1) that have been populated by a total of 53 variables.

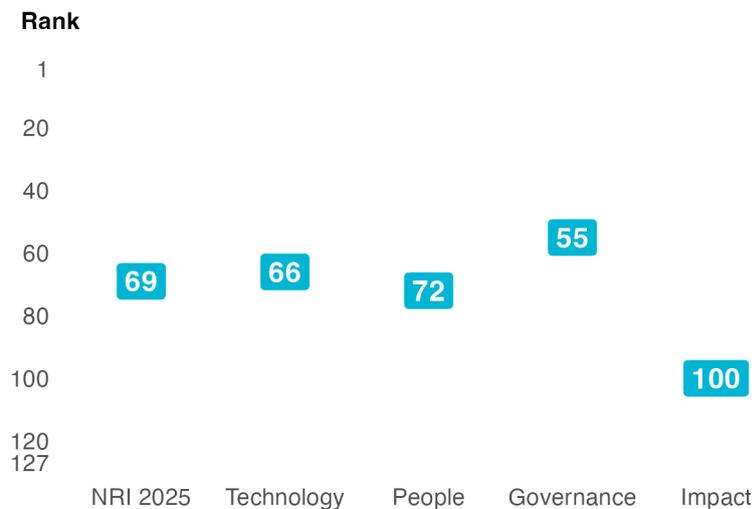
Figure 1: The NRI 2025 model



Global NRI position of South Africa

South Africa ranks 69 out of the 127 economies included in the NRI 2025 (Figure 2). Its main strength relates to Governance. The greatest scope for improvement, meanwhile, concerns Impact.

Figure 2: South Africa global ranking, overall and by pillar



Performance at sub-pillar level

When it comes to sub-pillars, the strongest showings of South Africa relate to Businesses, Future Technologies and Inclusion, among others (Table 1). More could be done, though, to improve the economy's performances in the Access, Individuals and Quality of Life sub-pillars.

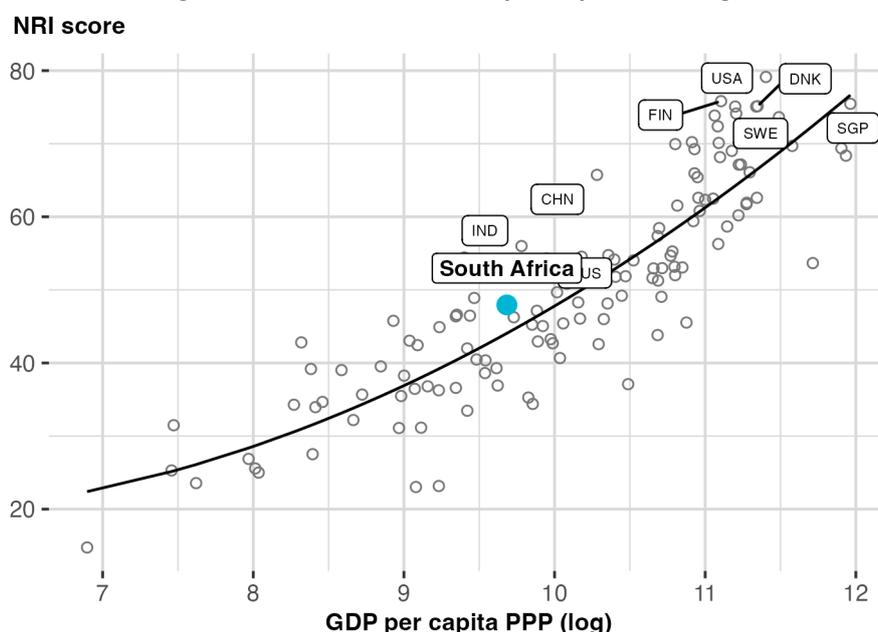
Table 1: South Africa rankings by sub-pillar

Sub-pillar	Rank	Sub-pillar	Rank
Businesses	38	SDG Contribution	64
Future Technologies	54	Economy	65
Inclusion	55	Governments	68
Content	58	Access	73
Regulation	58	Individuals	102
Trust	61	Quality of Life	117

NRI score and income

Figure 3 shows the position of South Africa in terms of both NRI score and GDP per capita (PPP). The trend line shows the expected NRI score given an economy's income level. As can be seen, South Africa is well above the trend line, which suggests that it has a greater network readiness than would be expected given its income level.

Figure 3: NRI score and GDP per capita PPP (log)



Note: USA = United States of America (rank: 1), FIN =Finland (rank: 2), SGP = Singapore (3), DNK =Denmark (4), SWE = Sweden (5), CHN =China (24), and IND = India (45).

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Performance against its income group and region

Upper-middle-income countries

South Africa is ranked 17th in the group of upper-middle-income countries (Figure 4, left panel). In terms of pillar performance, it has a score higher than the income group average in two of the four pillars: Technology and Governance. At the sub-pillar level, it outperforms upper-middle-income countries in ten of the twelve sub-pillars: Access, Content, Future Technologies, Businesses, Governments, Trust, Regulation, Inclusion, Economy and SDG Contribution.

Africa

South Africa is ranked 2nd within Africa (Figure 4, right panel). It outperforms its region in each of the four pillars. With regard to sub-pillars, it outperforms the average in Africa in eleven of the twelve sub-pillars: Access, Content, Future Technologies, Individuals, Businesses, Governments, Trust, Regulation, Inclusion, Economy and SDG Contribution.

Figure 4: Performance of South Africa against its income group and region, overall and by pillar

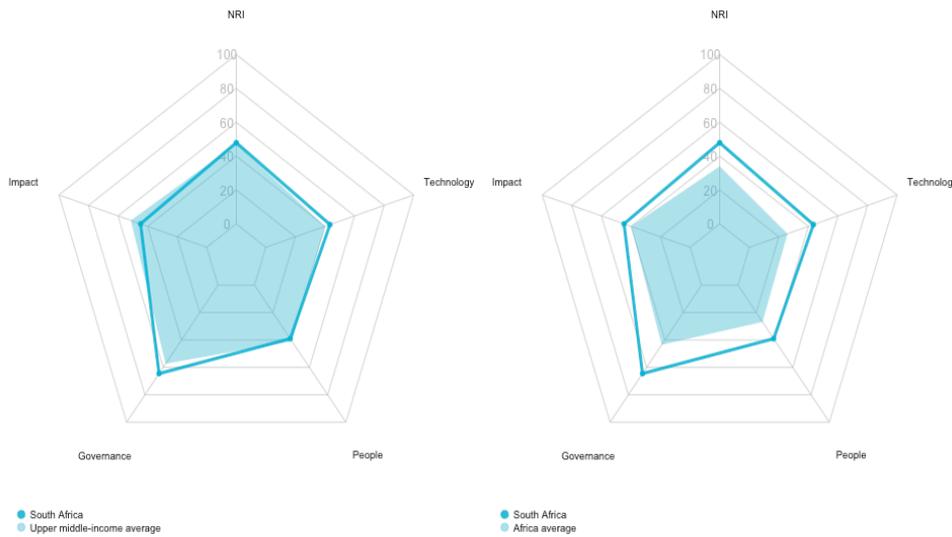


Table 2: South Africa scores vs. averages of its income group and region, overall and by pillar

Dimension	South Africa	Upper-middle-income countries	Africa
NRI	47.94	47.32	34.00
Technology	43.41	39.95	25.85
People	39.04	40.75	26.78
Governance	64.54	57.29	43.45
Impact	44.77	51.31	39.92

NRI 2025 At-A-Glance: South Africa

Network Readiness Index

Rank: 69 (out of 127)

Score: 47.94

Pillar/sub-pillar	Rank	Score	Pillar/sub-pillar	Rank	Score
A. Technology pillar	66	43.41	C. Governance pillar	55	64.54
1st sub-pillar: Access	73	66.58	1st sub-pillar: Trust	61	61.32
2nd sub-pillar: Content	58	26.65	2nd sub-pillar: Regulation	58	64.48
3rd sub-pillar: Future Technologies	54	37.01	3rd sub-pillar: Inclusion	55	67.83
B. People pillar	72	39.04	D. Impact pillar	100	44.77
1st sub-pillar: Individuals	102	37.36	1st sub-pillar: Economy	65	31.85
2nd sub-pillar: Businesses	38	41.62	2nd sub-pillar: Quality of Life	117	37.96
3rd sub-pillar: Governments	68	38.15	3rd sub-pillar: SDG Contribution	64	64.51

The Network Readiness Index in detail

Indicator	Rank	Score	Indicator	Rank	Score
A. Technology pillar	66	43.41	C. Governance pillar	55	64.54
1st sub-pillar: Access	73	66.58	1st sub-pillar: Trust	61	61.32
1.1.1 Mobile tariffs	93	51.24	3.1.1 Secure Internet servers	38	78.29
1.1.2 Handset prices	71	60.80	3.1.2 Cybersecurity	73	83.48
1.1.3 FTTH/building Internet subscriptions	28	46.27	3.1.3 Online access to financial account	10	67.36
1.1.4 Population covered by at least a 3G mobile network	40	99.21	3.1.4 Internet shopping	82	16.15
1.1.5 International Internet bandwidth	42	75.37	2nd sub-pillar: Regulation	58	64.48
1.1.6 Internet access in schools	n/a	n/a	3.2.1 Regulatory quality	83	36.63
2nd sub-pillar: Content	58	26.65	3.2.2 ICT regulatory environment	51	77.50
1.2.1 GitHub commits	85	4.13	3.2.3 Regulation of emerging technologies	61	44.82
1.2.2 Internet domain registrations	52	6.70	3.2.4 E-commerce legislation	1	100.00
1.2.3 Mobile apps development	71	62.53	3.2.5 Privacy protection by law content	62	63.44
1.2.4 AI scientific publications	24	33.24	3rd sub-pillar: Inclusion	55	67.83
3rd sub-pillar: Future Technologies	54	37.01	3.3.1 E-Participation	29	82.61
1.3.1 Adoption of emerging technologies	46	66.24	3.3.2 Socioeconomic gap in use of digital payments	80	60.10
1.3.2 Investment in emerging technologies	40	51.75	3.3.3 Gender gap in Internet use	n/a	n/a
1.3.3 Robot density	39	4.38	3.3.4 Rural gap in use of digital payments	45	60.77
1.3.4 Computer software spending	35	25.66	D. Impact pillar	100	44.77
B. People pillar	72	39.04	1st sub-pillar: Economy	65	31.85
1st sub-pillar: Individuals	102	37.36	4.1.1 ICT patent applications	51	1.28
2.1.1 Mobile broadband internet traffic within the country	40	27.15	4.1.2 Domestic market scale	32	65.55
2.1.2 ICT skills in the education system	98	29.27	4.1.3 Technology-Enabled Work Flexibility	47	52.67
2.1.3 Use of virtual social networks	98	39.73	4.1.4 ICT services exports	81	7.91
2.1.4 Adult literacy rate	58	86.15	2nd sub-pillar: Quality of Life	117	37.96
2.1.5 AI talent concentration	43	4.51	4.2.1 Happiness	90	43.63
2nd sub-pillar: Businesses	38	41.62	4.2.2 Freedom to make life choices	97	56.25

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Indicator	Rank	Score	
2.2.1 Firms with website	30	78.78	●
2.2.2 Number of venture capital deals invested in AI	57	7.24	
2.2.3 Annual investment in telecommunication services	31	49.79	●
2.2.4 Public cloud computing market scale	24	30.65	●
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3rd sub-pillar: Governments	68	38.15	
2.3.1 Government online services	24	86.43	●
2.3.2 Data Capabilities	61	30.63	
2.3.3 Government promotion of emerging technologies	86	25.92	
2.3.4 Gross expenditure on R&D	57	9.61	

Indicator	Rank	Score	
4.2.3 Income inequality	113	0.00	○
4.2.4 Healthy life expectancy at birth	123	28.00	○
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3rd sub-pillar: SDG Contribution	64	64.51	
4.3.1 SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being	72	80.00	
4.3.2 SDG 4: Quality Education	n/a	n/a	
4.3.3 SDG 5: Women's economic opportunity	51	82.73	
4.3.4 SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	113	44.78	○
4.3.5 SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	79	52.02	

NOTE: ● indicates a strength and ○ indicates a weakness.

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