

Report finds world ill-prepared for next pandemic

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(HealthDay)—The world isn't ready to prevent or deal with another

pandemic because many nations aren't taking the necessary steps to prepare for what is likely an inevitable future scenario, a new report shows.

The Global Health Security (GHS) index—an assessment of preparedness for various [health](#) emergencies and problems—is produced by the Nuclear Threat Initiative, Economist Impact and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

"The 2021 GHS Index continues to show that all countries still lack some critical capacities, which hinders their ability to respond effectively to COVID-19 and reduces their preparedness for future epidemic and pandemic threats. The average country score in 2021 was 38.9 out of 100, which is essentially unchanged from 2019," the [report](#) found.

The United States did have the highest overall score, at just under 76.

Preparedness in preventing the emergence of new pathogens was the area with the lowest worldwide score.

"The [global average](#) for the prevention of the emergence or release of pathogens is 28.4 out of 100, making it the lowest-scoring category within the GHS Index," the report authors wrote. They said 113 countries "show little to no attention" to diseases transmitted from animals to humans.

Within the past three years, 155 out of the 195 countries in the survey didn't invest in preparing for a pandemic or epidemic, and 70% didn't invest in clinics, hospitals and community health centers.

"Leaders now have a choice," Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo, senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security in Baltimore, told *CNN*. "They

can make dedicated, sustainable investments in the new capacities created during the COVID-19 response to prepare their countries for the long term, or they can fall back into the decades-long cycle of panic-and-neglect that will leave the world at grave risk for inevitable future public health threats."

The document also said that people in 161 countries have low to moderate levels of public confidence in their governments—a key factor among countries with high number of COVID-19 cases and deaths—and that the United States had the lowest possible score in that area.

"Such lack of confidence can undermine public adherence to disease-control measures, such as wearing masks or complying with stay-at-home recommendations or vaccination protocols, which have been reported among the ongoing challenges to the U.S. COVID-19 response," the index authors wrote. "Over nearly two years, U.S. politicians have questioned the motives and messages of health officials and debated the seriousness of the virus and the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. The result: in many areas of the country, people have been unwilling to comply with public health recommendations that would slow the spread of the virus."

Other weaknesses in the United States included limited access to [health care without cost barriers](#), and lower numbers of [health care](#) personnel and [hospital beds per capita](#) than many other high-income countries, the report found.

More information: Visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for more on [preparing for pandemics](#).

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