UNITED
NATIONS

GLOBAL RISK REPORT

2026



United Nations



"The global risk landscape has grown more complex and more crowded. No country, no company, no institution can face these risks alone. We owe it to present and future generations to use this knowledge wisely, and to act while cooperation can still shape a safer course."

Photo: Secretary-General Delivers Special Address on Climate Action © Mark Garten, 2025

PREFACE

We are living through a period of deep geopolitical turbulence.

Two years after the first United Nations Global Risk Survey, the landscape has shifted. Drawing on responses from more than 1,300 people across government, business, civil society, and the United Nations system, this second edition presents today's global risk landscape and the forces reshaping it.

The findings are sobering. Political risks have moved centre stage. The prospect of large-scale war is seen as far more important and far more immediate than it was two years ago. At the same time, the institutions expected to respond are seen as less able to act, especially in areas like artificial intelligence, where innovation is outpacing our capacity to govern it.

Yet one conviction holds firm: respondents still see joint action between governments as by far the most effective means of prevention. No country, no company, no institution can face these risks alone.

The 2026 Global Risk Report sets out the evidence that must inform our choices. We owe it to present and future generations to use this knowledge wisely, and to act while cooperation can still shape a safer course.

The choice is ours.

António Guterres

SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

United Nations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The global risk map has been redrawn

In 2024, when we first asked which global risks needed action, respondents were most concerned with environmental risks, misinformation, and pandemics. Two years on, perceptions have shifted, and the same set of questions has revealed a new global risk landscape. Geopolitics and war moved to the centre, and the institutions expected to respond are seen as less able to do so. Frontier technology emerged as a critical field where inadequate data and information sharing is a major driver of risk. The environment, despite attention shifting, is still perceived as a major global concern.

Large-scale war is the risk the world sees coming and is least ready to meet

Respondents ranked large-scale war as among the most interconnected, the biggest driver of other risks, and among the most important alongside geopolitical tensions. Most striking is how much closer it feels: large-scale war climbed sixteen places in how soon it is expected to materialize, the single largest upward shift in the survey.

Worries about technology risks rise

AI and frontier technologies and technology-driven power concentration were seen as far bigger global threats than in 2024. The multilateral system, already weakened by funding constraints, was viewed as especially unprepared for technological risks, with inadequate data and information posing an important challenge.

Environmental risks remain central, though attention has shifted

While other risks moved to the forefront, respondents put less emphasis on environmental risks in 2026. Still, the risks of climate change inaction, natural hazards and natural resource shortages are perceived as among the most important.

The landscape of risks may change, but solutions stay the same.

The biggest change to the global risk landscape in 2026 is that the risks seen as most important and interconnected are also now seen as the most imminent. Political risks like large-scale war and geopolitical tensions have gained prominence. But, across all geographies and sectors, respondents maintain that joint action remains the most effective path forward.

Perceptions do not always match conditions

The rankings in this report measure perceptions of risk. These judgments can shift even when the underlying conditions remain unchanged. That distinction matters, because political will and financial resources often follow perceived priorities. A risk should not be considered resolved simply because another risk has risen above it in the view of respondents.

The 2026 Global Risk Survey was conducted from 19 February 2026 to 24 April 2026, and the responses recorded in this report might partly be reflections of pressing events during this timeframe.

Understanding global risks to build a better future

This report draws on a survey of 1,300 stakeholders in government, business, civil society, and the UN system, spanning all world regions. They assessed 28 global risks across five groups: political, technological, economic, environmental, and societal. For each risk, they rated how likely it is, how severe, how soon it might materialize, how ready multilateral institutions are to handle it, and what helps or blocks an effective response.

The results are compared with the first such survey in 2024. Together, the two surveys show not just where the risk landscape stands but also which way it is moving. By giving Member States and policymakers a shared, evidence-based view of the risk landscape and the state of the multilateral system, the report aims to help them act before today's risks become tomorrow's crises.

GLOBAL VULNERABILITIES

VULNERABILITIES ARE EXPOSED WHERE GLOBAL RISKS OUTPACE MULTILATERAL PREPAREDNESS

A global vulnerability emerges when a large gap is perceived between the importance of a risk and the multilateral system's preparedness to respond to it.

1. Political risks emerged as the strongest vulnerability

Every political risk was seen as more important than it was in 2024, making this the most concerning shift overall. Respondents also rated the preparedness of multilateral institutions lower for all but one of the political risks. The risk of large-scale war stands out most: it rose in importance, fell fastest in preparedness, and is among the most interconnected risks.

2. Vulnerability to technological risks like AI and technology-driven power concentration increased

Multilateral preparedness for technological risks was perceived to be low in 2024 and remained low in 2026. Perceived importance rose sharply for AI and frontier technologies and technology-driven power concentration, but preparedness failed to keep pace. Stakeholders also remained anxious about the risk of cybersecurity breakdowns. Understanding of these technological risks remains weak, making them a critical global vulnerability.

3. Vulnerability to economic risks increased

Worries about economic risks increased. Four of the five economic risks were perceived as more important than in 2024. The risk of a global financial crisis stands out, with respondents increasingly fearing its systemic impact and the reduced ability of the multilateral system to coordinate a response.

4. Environmental risks decreased in perceived importance; preparedness stayed mixed

Respondents rated environmental risks as somewhat less important than in 2024. Multilateral preparedness is seen as mixed, not uniformly worse. Biodiversity decline and large-scale pollution moved out of the high-vulnerability area, mainly because they are now seen as less important, not because preparedness improved. There remains high vulnerability to natural hazard risks, partly because the capacity to reduce them is still seen as weak. Despite all the shifts in the perceptions of respondents, climate change inaction is still seen as the most important global risk.

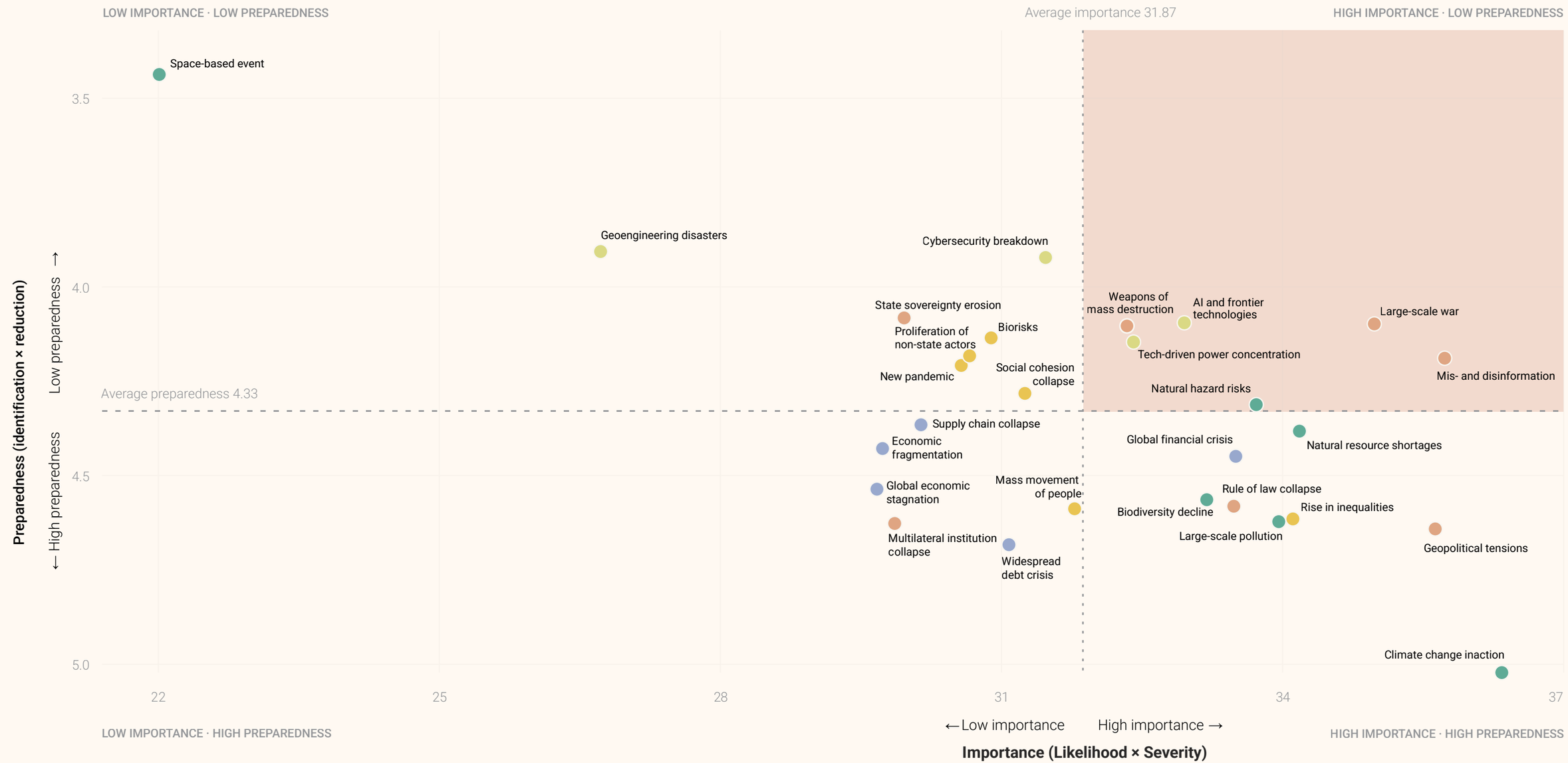
5. Perceived vulnerability decreased for societal risks

Six years after Covid-19, respondents are noticeably less worried about new pandemics and biorisks than they were in 2024. Mass movement of people and proliferation of non-state actors are also less prominent. Compared to 2024, respondents viewed the multilateral system as more prepared to respond to these risks.

Respondents stress political, technological & environmental vulnerabilities

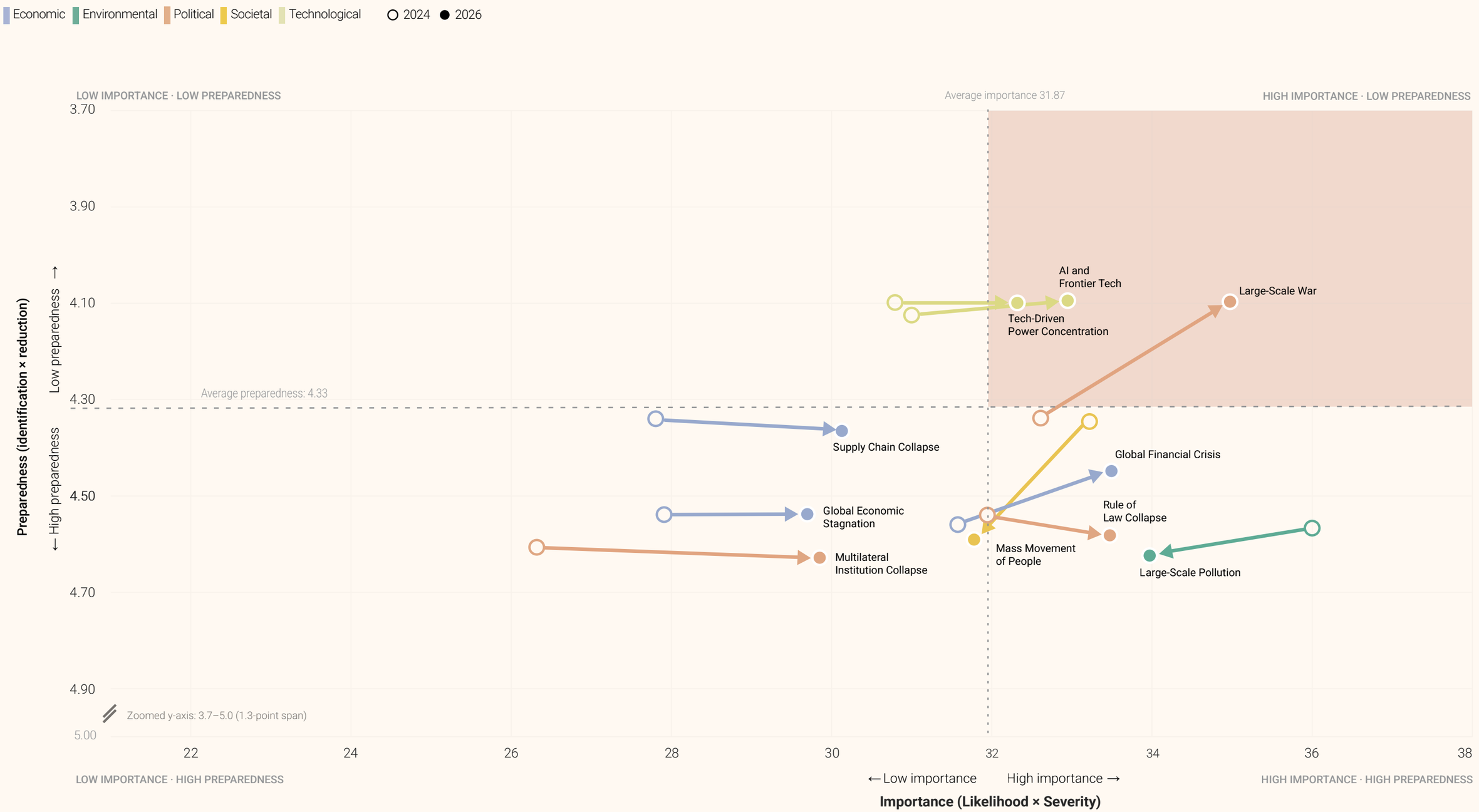
Respondents rate several risks as highly important but multilateral preparedness as low: large-scale war, mis- and disinformation, and weapons of mass destruction; AI and frontier technologies and tech-driven power concentration; and natural hazards.

Economic Environmental Political Societal Technological



Political, economic & technological risks rose most

Compared with 2024, ten risks moved most on the vulnerability map. Eight risks rose sharply: three political, three economic, and two technological. One environmental and one societal risk declined



WHICH RISKS ARE WE LEAST PREPARED FOR?

Multilateral institutions are seen as stronger on identifying risks, weaker on reducing them

Respondents see most capacity in the ability of multilateral institutions to identify risks and warn of emerging threats. Yet, their confidence in the capacity to reduce risks has declined for 23 of the 28 risks over the last two years, partly because resources are stretched. 86 per cent of stakeholders view funding for risk reduction as inadequate.

Multilateral institutions are least prepared for technological risks

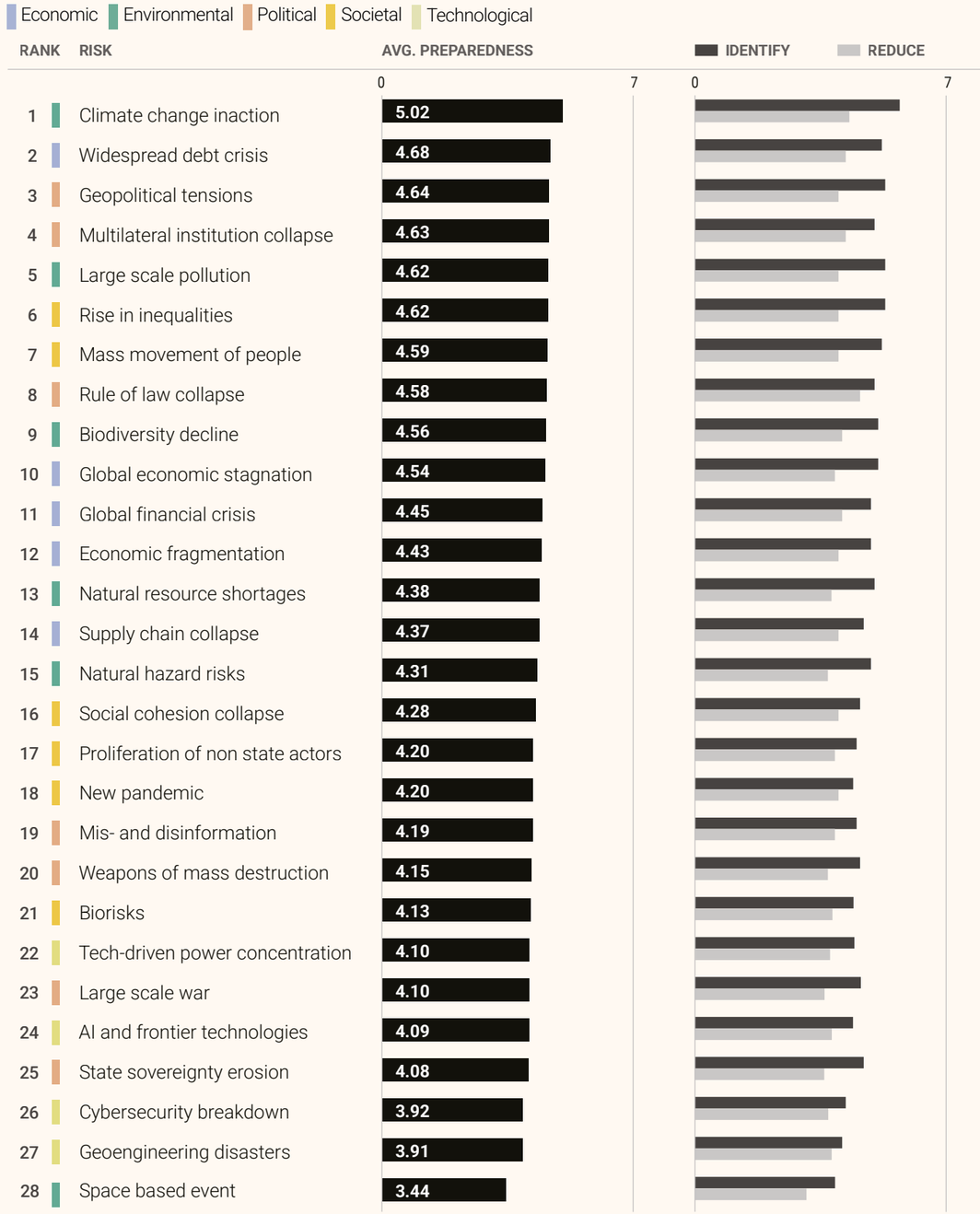
Respondents view the multilateral system as least prepared to respond to global technological risks. Technology-driven power concentration ranks 22nd for preparedness, AI and frontier technologies 24th, cybersecurity breakdown 26th, and geoengineering disasters 27th out of 28. As things currently stand, respondents do not think the international system is equipped well enough to identify or reduce these risks.

DEFINITION

Risk preparedness measures the ability of multilateral institutions to identify and reduce risks. The risks with the highest preparedness are those where respondents see the multilateral system as ready to both spot emerging threats and act effectively to address them.

Preparedness for technological risks was perceived to be the lowest

Average preparedness reflects the ability of institutions to identify and reduce each risk



The risks of climate change inaction, widespread debt crisis, and geopolitical tensions are ranked highest in preparedness

Climate change inaction, widespread debt crisis, and geopolitical tensions stand out as the risks where stakeholders see multilateral preparedness as stronger compared to other risks. For these risks, preparedness is perceived as high primarily in terms of risk identification rather than risk reduction. These cases suggest that where mandates are long-standing and mechanisms already exist, institutions are seen as better equipped to respond.



Funding for risk reduction is deemed inadequate by most respondents

Respondents were asked to assess funding adequacy across four stages of risk management

Funding for **Risk Identification**:



Funding for **Risk Mitigation & Reduction**:



Funding for **Disaster Response**:



Funding for **Disaster Recovery & Reconstruction**:



WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT GLOBAL RISKS?

Climate change inaction is still viewed as most important while political risks rise

Even though stakeholders are increasingly worried about global political risks, climate change inaction continued to be seen as the most important global risk. However, political risks have overtaken other environmental risks since 2024 and were seen as both the most likely to occur and the most severe. Respondents especially see large-scale war, rule of law collapse and geopolitical tensions as more likely to happen than before.

Financial crisis and AI-related risks rise while risks related to pandemics and migration decline

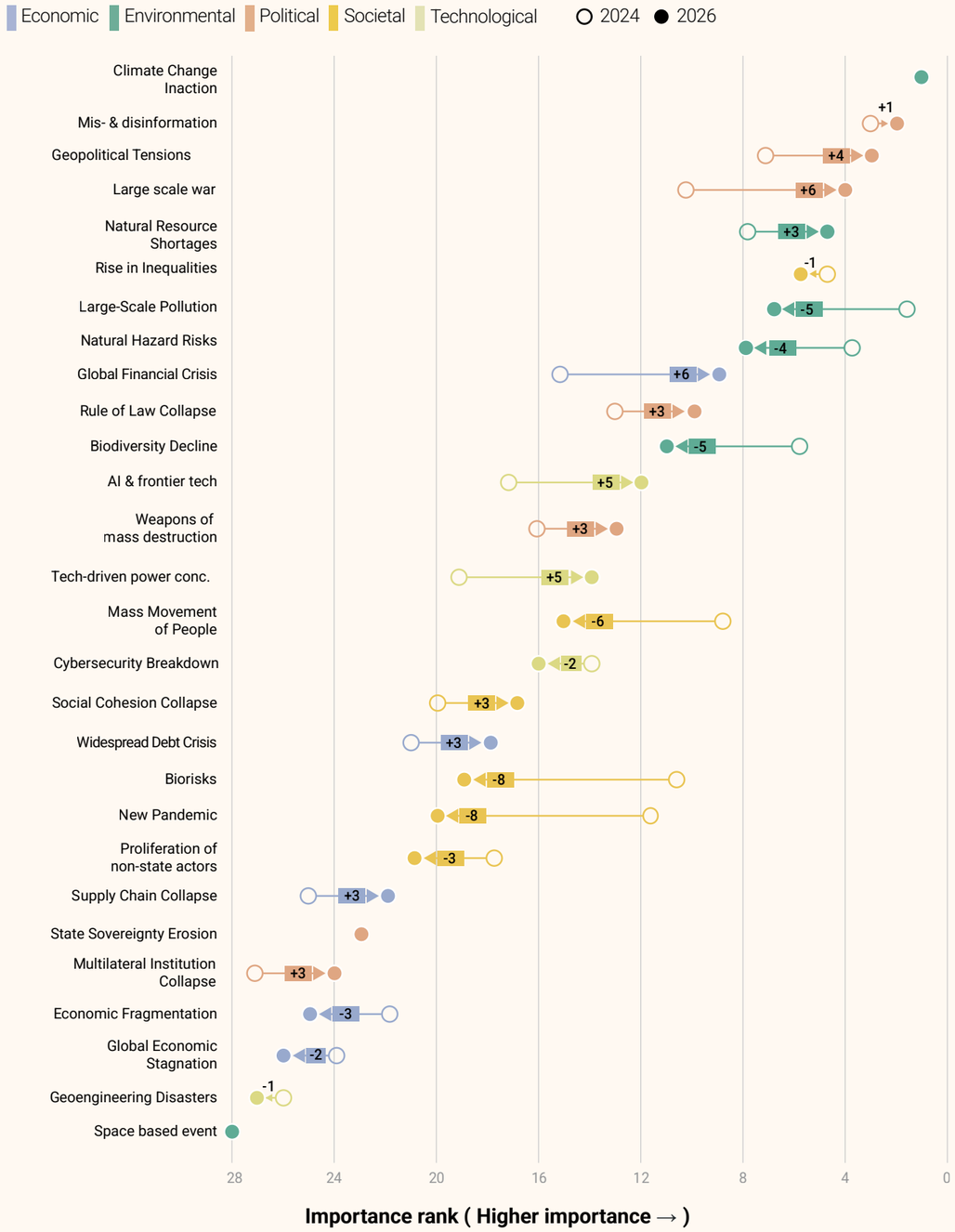
Respondents perceived the severity and likelihood of political and environmental risks to be the highest, with societal, technological, and economic risks following. However, several risks within these categories still moved significantly. Stakeholders perceived global financial crises, AI and frontier tech, and tech-driven power concentration as more important while viewing mass movement of people, biorisks, and new pandemics as less likely and severe.

DEFINITION

Risk importance reflects respondents' perceptions of how likely they think a risk is and of how severe they expect its impact to be. The risks with the highest importance are those seen as both likely to happen and severe when they do.

Climate change inaction is still seen as the most important risk

How each risk moved in the importance ranking: ordered by the 2026 ranking



Worries over political risks overtake environmental risks across many regions

War and geopolitical tension now rank in the top ten everywhere

The rise of political risks is apparent across all seven regions. Large-scale war and geopolitical tensions are now among the top five global risks in six of the seven regions, compared with just one region each in 2024. Weapons of mass destruction also entered the top ten most important risks in three regions: Central and Southern Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Oceania.

Economic and technological risks climbed in Asia, Europe, and Northern America

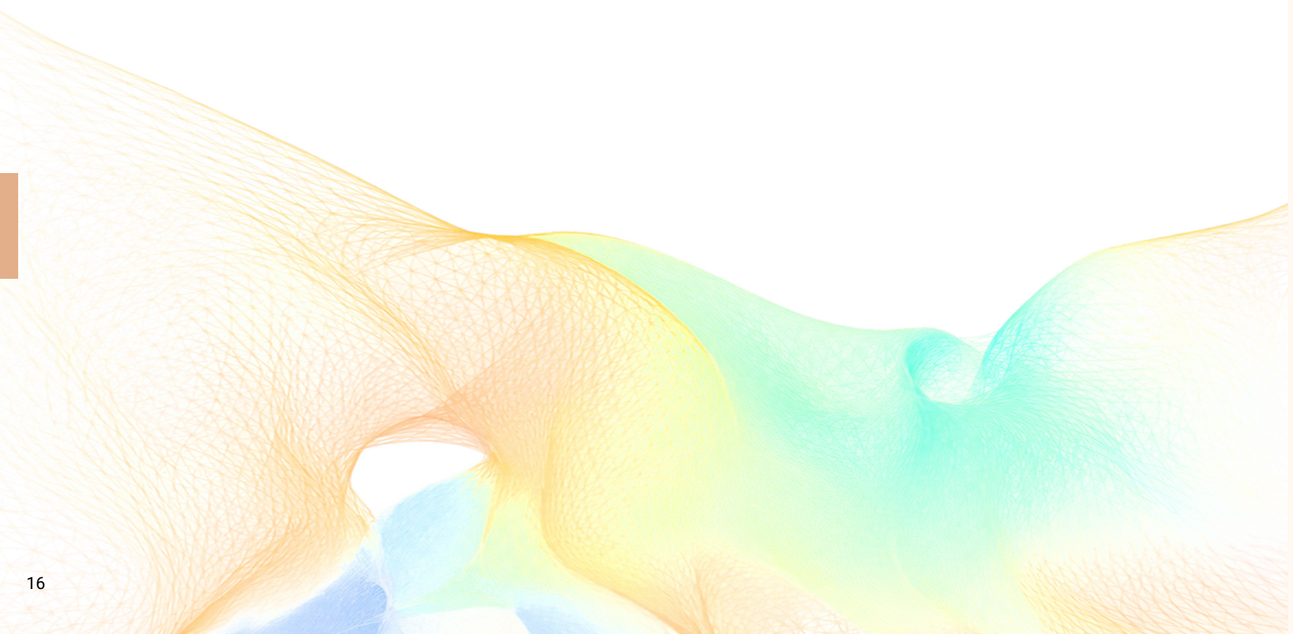
In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, respondents ranked global financial crisis, AI and frontier technologies, and technology-driven power concentration among the top ten risks. AI and frontier technologies also entered the top ten in Europe and Northern America.

Pandemics and biorisks drop from every region's top 10

Respondents stopped viewing biorisks and new pandemics as highly important, with both risks falling outside the top ten across all seven regions. In the previous survey, these risks were still perceived as pressing in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa

Environmental risks fell below political risks

Global environmental risks matter less to respondents than they did in 2024, when they dominated rankings. But respondents still perceived risks of climate change inaction as important across all regions. Natural resource shortages are also seen as an important global risk across regions.



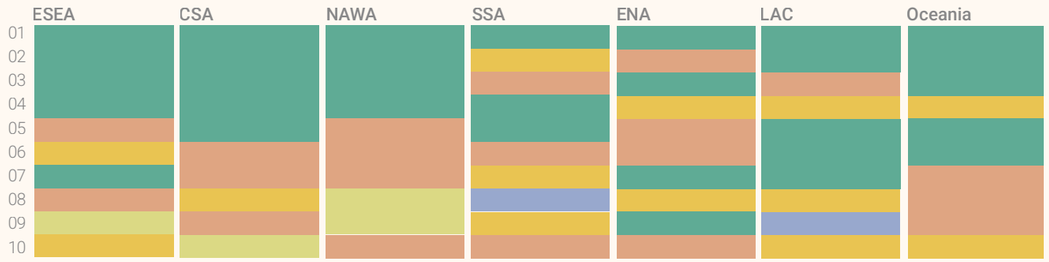
Political risks now rank first in most regions

Top 10 risks ranked by mean importance within each respondent region for 2026

Economic | Environmental | Political | Societal | Technological

	East & South-East Asia (ESEA)	Central & South Asia (CSA)	North Africa & West Asia (NAWA)	Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)	Europe & North America (ENA)	Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC)	Oceania
01	Climate Change Inaction	Large-Scale War	Geopolitical Tensions	Large-Scale War	Climate Change Inaction	Climate Change Inaction	Large-Scale War
02	Mis- & Dis-Information	Geopolitical Tensions	Large-Scale War	Geopolitical Tensions	Mis- & Dis-Information	Mis- & Dis-Information	Climate Change Inaction
03	Geopolitical Tensions	Large-Scale Pollution	Mis- & Dis-Information	Rise in Inequalities	Geopolitical Tensions	Rise in Inequalities	Weapons of Mass Destruction
04	Natural Resource Shortages	Rule of Law Collapse	Natural Resource Shortages	Climate Change Inaction	Natural Resource Shortages	Geopolitical Tensions	Large-Scale Pollution
05	Large-Scale War	Global Financial Crisis	Global Financial Crisis	Weapons of Mass Destruction	Large-Scale War	Large-Scale Pollution	Mis- & Dis-Information
06	AI and Frontier Tech	Weapons of Mass Destruction	Rule of Law Collapse	Large-Scale Pollution	Rise in Inequalities	Natural Resource Shortages	Rule of Law Collapse
07	Natural Hazard Risks	Climate Change Inaction	Climate Change Inaction	Mis- & Dis-Information	Natural Hazard Risks	Biodiversity Decline	Rise in Inequalities
08	Tech-Driven Power Conc.	Natural Resource Shortages	Economic Fragmentation	Global Financial Crisis	Biodiversity Decline	Large-Scale War	Geopolitical Tensions
09	Global Financial Crisis	Rise in Inequalities	Natural Hazard Risks	Natural Hazard Risks	Large-Scale Pollution	Rule of Law Collapse	Natural Hazard Risks
10	Rise in Inequalities	Natural Hazard Risks	Tech-Driven Power Conc.	Mass Movement of People	AI and Frontier Tech	Global Financial Crisis	Biodiversity Decline

2024 Ranking:



WHEN WILL RISKS MATERIALIZE?

Large-scale war is now expected much sooner

Large-scale war has shifted sharply from a distant threat to an immediate one. It jumped sixteen places on imminence, the survey's biggest upward shift. 36 per cent of respondents expected large-scale war within one year, and 76 per cent within seven years.

The most immediate threats are political, led by mis- and disinformation

Respondents expected political risks to materialize earlier than other risks. The risk of mis- and disinformation was ranked as most imminent, the same as in 2024. A majority of respondents also expected geopolitical tensions to rise this year and the risk of rule of law collapse to increase.

Economic risks are expected sooner, biorisks later

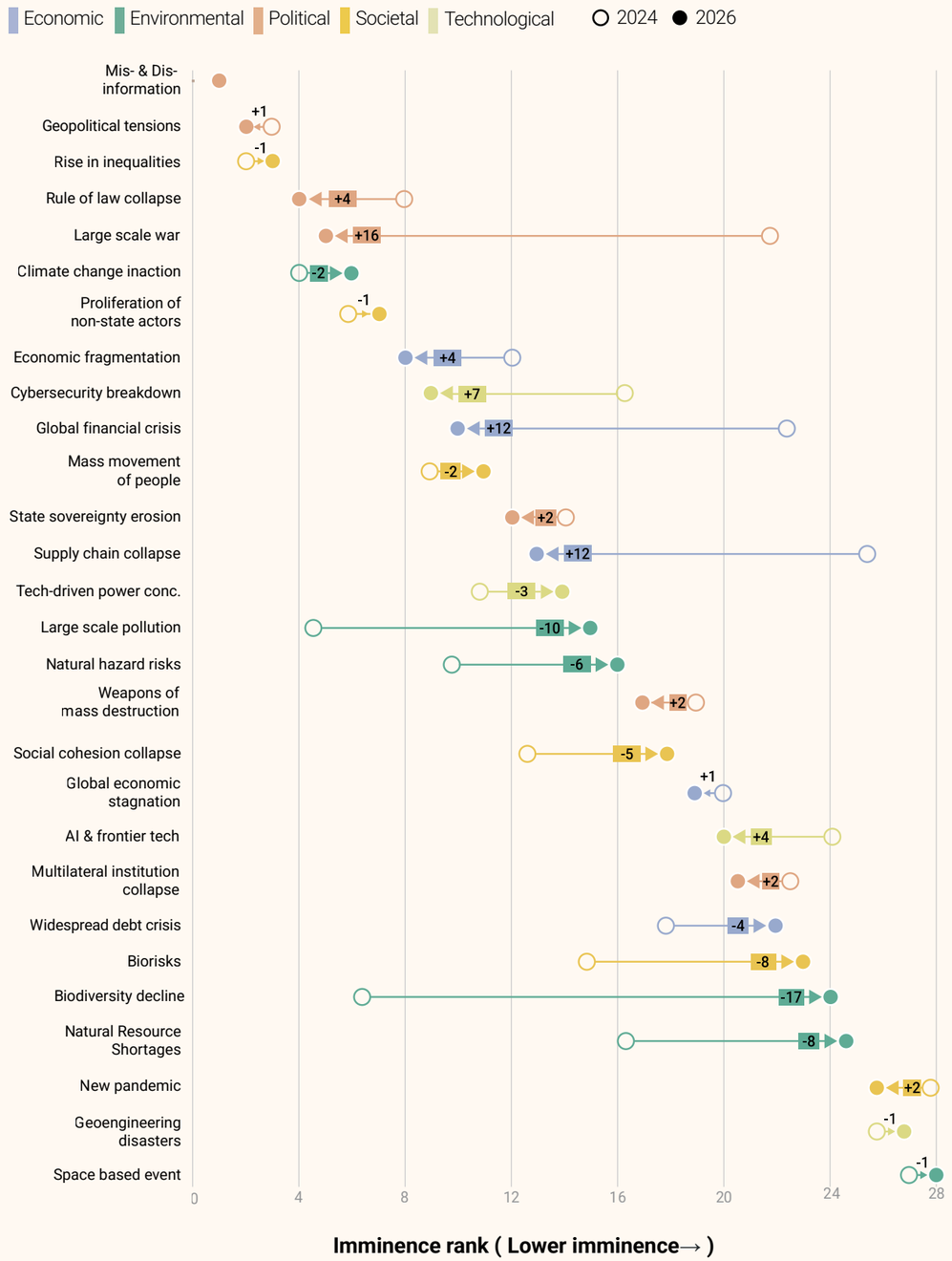
Respondents increasingly saw global financial crisis and supply chain collapse as risks that could affect the world in the near term. In contrast, biorisks and new pandemics were largely seen as long-term concerns. Most respondents also expected natural resource shortages, geoengineering disasters, and space-based events to have potential impacts only after the next eight years.

Environmental risks now feel less urgent

Biodiversity decline and large-scale pollution recorded the largest declines since 2024. Both risks moved down sharply, suggesting that respondents now expect them to materialize much later than they did in 2024.

Political risks are seen as most imminent

How each risk moved in the imminence ranking: ordered by the 2026 ranking



WHAT ENABLES OR BLOCKS EFFECTIVE **RISK MANAGEMENT?**

Respondents continue to see multilateral action as the most effective response to global risks

Stakeholders rated joint action between governments as the most effective response across all risks. It is especially crucial for political risks like geopolitical tensions, large-scale war, and weapons of mass destruction.

The right response depends on the risk

Responses indicate that governments and civil society must work together on societal and political risks such as rising inequalities, rule of law collapse, social cohesion collapse, and state sovereignty erosion. For economic and technological risks like global financial crisis, supply chain collapse, AI and frontier tech, and cybersecurity breakdown, cooperation between governments and the private sector is seen as crucial. Across the board, acting alone is seen as far less effective than acting together.

Multi-government action is seen as the most effective action by far

Frequency of mentions, across all 28 risks that respondents assigned effectiveness to

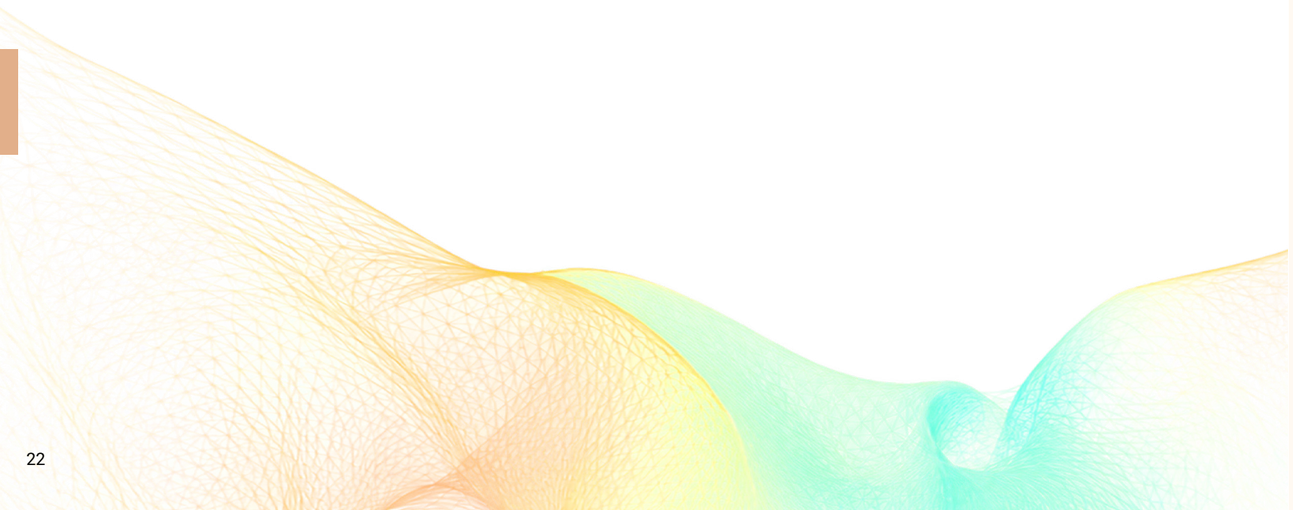


Weak governance or coordination mechanisms are what often hold action back

Weak governance or coordination mechanisms are seen as the major challenge, hampering the effective management of almost all global risks. Respondents also pointed to a lack of political consensus as the main obstacle for political risks, and to incorrect prioritization as the key barrier for environmental risks and new pandemics.

Inadequate data, information, and funding hamper specific risk response

For fast-moving, technically complex risks like AI and frontier technologies, mis- and disinformation, new pandemics, geoengineering disasters, and space-based events, respondents identified inadequate data and information as a key obstacle. They emphasized that a better shared understanding is essential as a first step to managing these risks. For other better-understood risks, such as natural hazards and multilateral institutional collapse, respondents know what action is needed but identify inadequate funding as an obstacle.



Weak governance and lack of political consensus are perceived to be the biggest barriers to risk management

Frequency of mentions, across all 28 risks that respondents assigned 'barriers' to



HOW ARE GLOBAL **RISKS INTERCONNECTED?**

How respondents rate risks tells part of the story. How risks connect tells the rest: which ones amplify others, and which are amplified in turn. Global risks form a network in which they can feed back on and accelerate one another.

Geopolitical tensions, rule of law collapse and large-scale war are the most interconnected risks

Respondents viewed the risks of rule of law collapse, large-scale war and geopolitical tensions as the most connected nodes at the core of the network. Respondents see these risks as important not just in themselves, but as key drivers and consequences of other risks. This makes them critical to managing the overall risk landscape. Weak preparedness for them can cascade through the wider system.

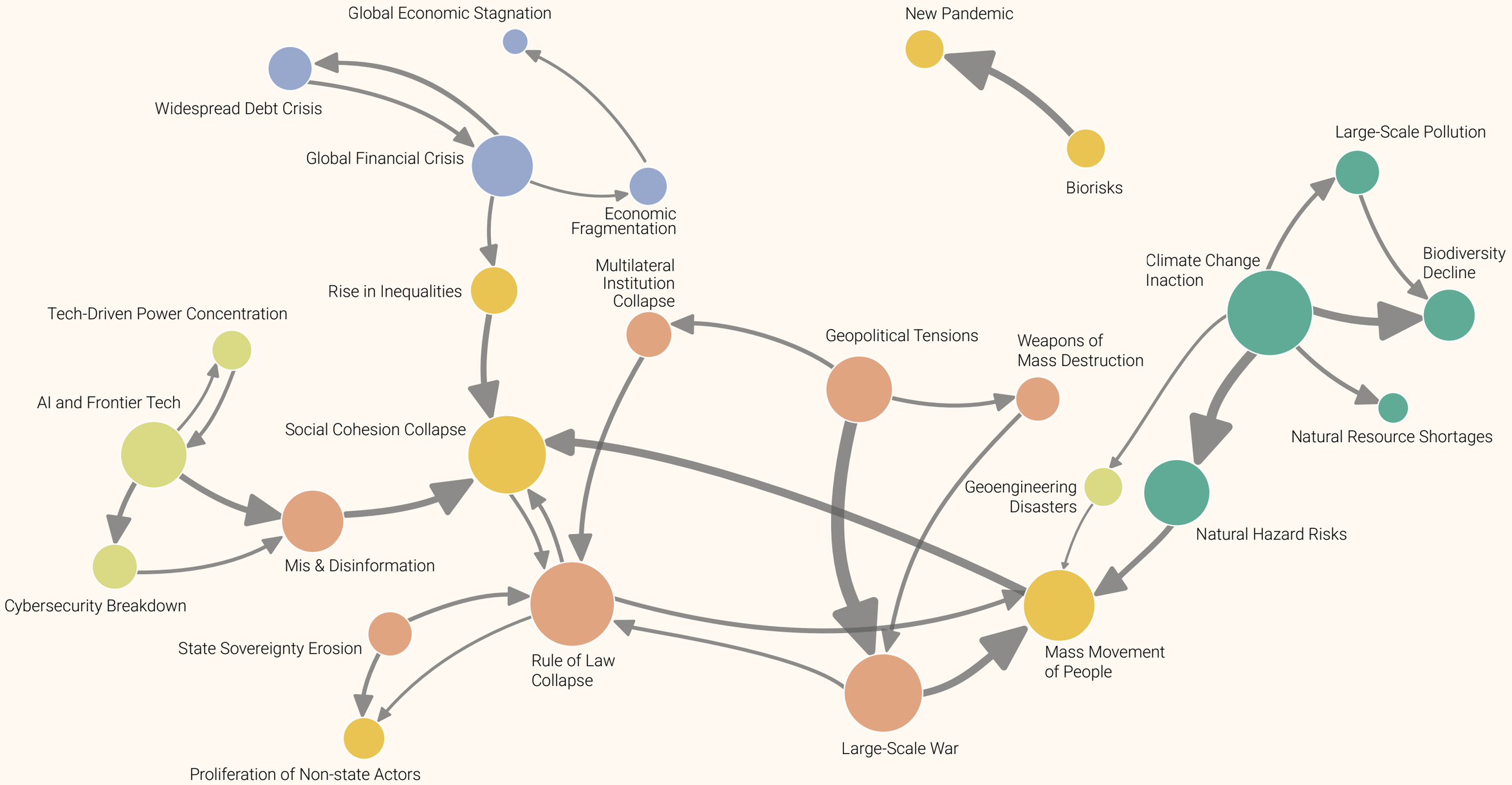
Spillover risks connect categories across the network

A few risks act as connectors between whole groups of risks, channelling impacts from the periphery of the network towards the core. Mis- and disinformation channels the impacts of technological risks into the societal domain. Environmental risks drive mass movements of people with their societal and political ramifications. By causing a rise in inequalities, economic risks can have an impact far beyond the economic realm.

Political risks are at the centre of the 2026 risk network

Network map showing the strongest 5% of connections among global risks. Arrow width represents connection strength; circle size represents each risk's total incoming and outgoing connection strength.

Economic Environmental Political Societal Technological



Societal risks are strong consequences; climate change inaction is a strong driver of other risks

Social cohesion collapse, mass movement of people, and rising inequalities are tightly woven into the network, but mainly as consequences of other risks rather than as causes. Climate change inaction stands apart as one of the strongest drivers in the network, suggesting that action on climate matters not just for climate itself but for a range of other environmental risks.

DEFINITION

Some global risks are seen to cause others, they are called drivers. Some risks are caused by others, they are described as consequences. Most risks are perceived as both drivers and consequences, with a group of political risks seen as powerfully catalysing in both directions. Global risks placed higher in the graph are strong drivers. Risks further to the right are strong consequences. Risks in the top-right corner are both strong drivers and strong consequences.

Climate change inaction causes other risks, societal risks are major consequences

Each risk plotted by how many other risks it triggers (vertical) against how many trigger it (horizontal), based on causal links between the 28 risks drawn by respondents.

Economic Environmental Political Societal Technological



STRATEGIC FORESIGHT: A "BACKCAST" FROM LARGE-SCALE WAR

What is the role of foresight in global risk management?

Strategic foresight is an important tool for considering the choices and paths that can lead to the realization of a global risk. While in 2024 our report looked forward with a series of diverse future scenarios, the 2026 report considers the single greatest global vulnerability and works backwards from its realization to consider the connections, choices, and activities that contribute to it.

Backcasting is not a prediction of future events, but a strategic foresight tool that draws attention to the relationships between planning assumptions, policy choices, and outcomes. It presents one future and considers how we might have arrived there.

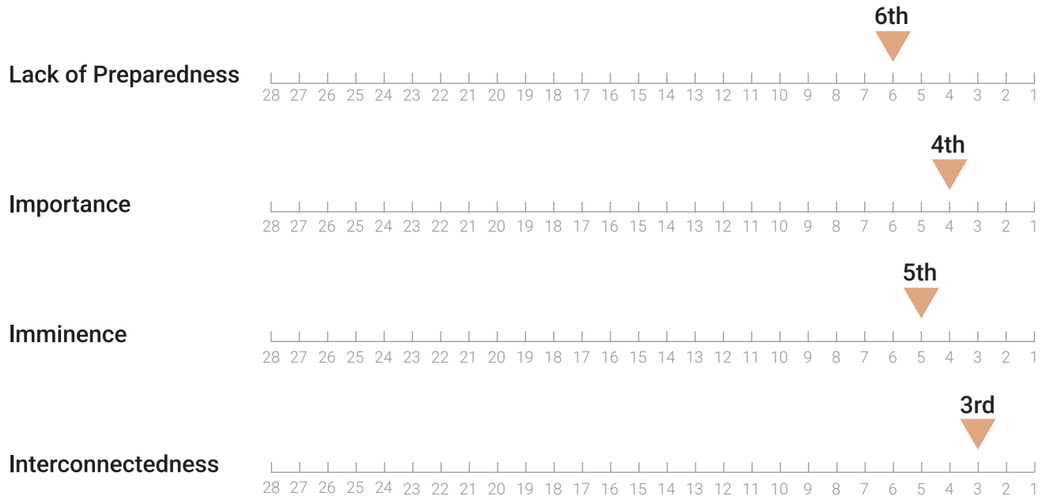
This foresight exercise incorporates four main data sets from the global risk survey. It uses rankings of importance, imminence, preparedness, and interconnectedness to surface the drivers of large-scale war, then draws on the actions and barriers tied to those risks to identify policy actions.

Why look backwards from large-scale war?

The most significant finding from the 2026 Global Risk Report is about the centrality and imminence of large-scale war. It was the only global risk that ranked in the top-6 in interconnectedness, importance, imminence, and lack of preparedness.

No risk in the 2024 survey featured so centrally, and no other risk does for 2026.

Large-scale war is seen as pressing across all dimensions



The pathways to large-scale war

…it's 2030, armies of people and machines are mobilizing, and the world finds itself on the brink of total war. How could we possibly have arrived here?

The interconnections data shows that the single most likely path to an end-state of large-scale war is increased geopolitical tension, which happens when significant changes occur in the global political landscape, involving alterations in power dynamics, alliances, and strategic interests among countries. This connection between large-scale war and geopolitical tension is the strongest link between any two risks among all 705 connections identified in the survey.

This connection reveals how we get to the brink of war, but not the policy choices that may lead to it. For that, we need to step back to the main drivers of geopolitical tension and the policy choices that can increase their likelihood.

The drivers of geopolitical tension

... it's 2028 and a series of overlapping crises is straining the world order. Geopolitical tension is rising, driven by an increasingly volatile set of vectors: natural resource shortages, economic fragmentation, misinformation, and the weakening of multilateral institutions. There are off-ramps to reduce the risk, but they are blocked by a series of known barriers.

These four global risks are the ones most closely connected to a rise in geopolitical tension. These risks come from completely different risk categories, have different constituencies of actors, and have widely diverse timelines for realization. Their only unifying trait in the survey is that they are the primary drivers of geopolitical tension.

It is rarely a single driver or event that leads to the realization of a global risk, but rather a networked series of decisions, accidents, and actors that increases the risk. For each of these four drivers of geopolitical tension, the survey respondents identified multigovernmental action as the optimal path to mitigate risk.

This might seem straightforward, but three barriers stand in the way: weak governance and coordination mechanisms, lack of political consensus, and a lack of trust and accountability.

From today, the policy choices we confront and risks we do not address

... it's 2026 and warning bells from disparate risks have begun to ring louder. The drivers of geopolitical tensions are accelerating, and the policy choices made today will take the world closer to large-scale war or away from it.

If we want to understand how the drivers of geopolitical tension can be mitigated or aggravated, we can consider policy choices in areas that most affect them.

For natural resource shortages, the main risk connector from the list of 28 risks is climate change inaction. For economic fragmentation, it is a global financial crisis; for misinformation, it is AI and frontier technologies; and for multilateral institution collapse, it is the breakdown of the rule of law.

The purpose of the backcast is to make apparent to policymakers the possible future impact of their choices. The Global Risk Report presents connections, barriers, actions, and implications that raise challenging questions:

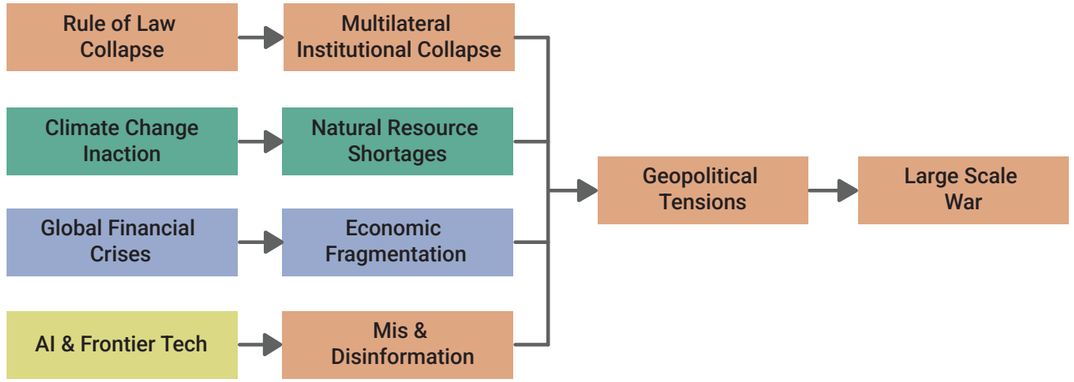
- Are your organization's policies strengthening the rule of law?
- How are they impacting action on climate change?
- Are they helping alleviate economic fragmentation?
- Are they combatting misinformation?

Respondents see these four policy choices as the most important determinants of whether we move closer to or farther away from a future mobilization towards large-scale war.

Lessons learned or lost

This backcasting exercise does not predict large-scale war. What it does is provide a lens through which policymakers can consider the second- and third-order effects of today's policy choices on the future state of the world. Like the risks themselves, policy choices are interconnected and impactful across time horizons. Strategic foresight can make these connections visible earlier, showing how choices in one domain can shape risks, opportunities, and outcomes well beyond it.

Connections to large-scale war



WHAT THIS **REPORT MEANS**

In just two years, perceptions have shifted significantly

The 2026 survey reveals a global risk map reorganizing around political risks. Geopolitical tensions and large-scale war now rank among the most connected, important, and imminent risks. While the risks of AI and frontier technologies and technology-driven power concentration have risen, new pandemics and biorisks are seen as less important six years after Covid-19. Environmental risks have been overtaken by political ones and are seen as slightly less important than in 2024. Yet climate change inaction remains the most important risk for respondents.

Attention and perceptions impact the real world

Political will and financial resources can be impacted by media or political attention. The risks that slip down the rankings can lose the resources and efforts devoted to them, whether or not the danger has eased. Still, a risk can rise to the top of the rankings and still find the system unprepared for it. The value of asking the same question every two years is to see these shifts as they happen, while there is still time to consider a course correction.

Respondents still look to the multilateral system to act

The findings of this year's report point to a system under growing strain, in which the risks that matter most are becoming harder to manage. Stakeholders see political risks moving toward the centre of the risk landscape and feel that the institutions that need to act are less able to do so. Despite these shifts, they continue to agree that multi-government action remains far superior to managing risks alone.

ANNEX 1: RISK IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITIONS

While there is no United Nations definition of global risks, for the purposes of this report, a "global risk" is defined as *"an event or condition that would have a significant negative impact on a large portion of humanity and the planet."*

The information presented in this report is grounded in a perception study of 28 global risks, identified through a rigorous and structured process. This process began with an extensive literature review of over 40 well-known global risk reports, sourced from global, regional, and national levels, and authored by a diverse range of stakeholders, including the private sector, public sector, and civil society. This review resulted in the identification of more than 100 risks, which were then categorized using the STEEP framework (Economic, Environmental, Political, Societal, Technological) (Table 1).

The initial long list underwent a detailed risk-by-risk assessment conducted by the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver, which involved the following steps:

1. Clearly define each risk, and how it could materialize.

2. Conduct an in-depth review of existing literature from research and policy sources to deepen the understanding of each risk, focusing on drivers and potential outcomes.

3. Informed by this literature, estimate the likelihood of each risk occurring by the year 2050.

4. Analyze the potential impact of each risk within the broader context, considering the wider implications of its occurrence.

Based on this rigorous assessment, a shortlisting exercise was conducted. This list was carefully curated to ensure it was holistic, capturing a comprehensive range of risks. Each risk on the list was selected because it was determined to have a non-negligible probability of occurring and a significant negative impact on both humanity and ecosystems.

Subsequently, the refined list was reviewed by over 20 technical focal points—nominated by members of the Secretary-General's Executive Committee, selected specialized United Nations agencies, and verified by technical representatives from all five Regional Commissions of the United Nations. Consultations held between December 2023 and February 2024 culminated in a final list of 28 global risks, categorized by the STEEP framework (Table 2: Risk list and definitions). This list was officially validated and endorsed by the Deputies Committee and the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General and serves as a foundation for the perception study that underpins this report.

Table 1: STEEP framework

Category	Definition
Societal	Risks that affect the stability, cohesion, and overall well-being of societies. These risks are often driven by factors such as inequality, public health challenges, and social unrest, and can lead to widespread disruptions in the social fabric.
Technological	Risks that emerge from the development, deployment, and reliance on technology. These risks encompass issues related to the availability, security, and equity of technological infrastructure and services.
Environmental	Risks that arise from the degradation of natural ecosystems and changes in climate patterns, affecting the sustainability of life on Earth.
Economic	Risks that impact the stability and growth of global economies. These risks are closely related to financial systems, markets, and the broader economy.
Political	Threats that negatively impact geopolitical relations or undermine political stability.

Table 2: Risk list and definitions

STEEP Category	Risk	Definition
Economic	Economic Fragmentation	The breakdown of an economy into smaller, relatively independent and isolated components or segments, manifesting in the separation of markets, industries, or regions, leading to reduced integration and cohesion within the overall economic system.
Economic	Global Financial Crisis	Severe disruption in the international financial system characterized by widespread banking and financial sector distress, currency devaluations, and economic downturns affecting multiple countries or regions simultaneously.
Economic	Supply Chain Collapse	Collapse of availability of businesses, people and activities involved in the procurement, logistics, transformation and delivery of finished goods.
Economic	Sustained Global Economic Stagnation	Prolonged period of minimal or no growth in the worldwide economy, marked by sluggish or stagnant economic activity, high unemployment, limited expansion across multiple sectors, deepening inequalities and mounting pressures of indebtedness.
Economic	Widespread Debt Crisis	A significant number of entities, such as countries, regions, or sectors, facing a high level of financial distress due to an inability to meet their debt obligations. It can result from economic downturns, fiscal mismanagement, external shocks, or a combination of these factors.
Environmental	Inaction on Climate Change	Failure or reluctance of individuals, governments, or organizations to implement substantial measures or policies aimed at mitigating and adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change, such as rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and environmental degradation.
Environmental	Large-Scale Natural Hazard Risks	Potential for widespread damage, disruption, or loss caused by changing meteorological conditions as well as natural phenomena like earthquakes and volcanic activities.
Environmental	Large-Scale Pollution	Extensive and widespread contamination of air, water, or land, leading to significant demand for financial resources, human effort, and time to remediate. This includes forms of pollution such as ambient air pollution, chemical pollution, physical waste, or radioactive isotopes, as well as space waste and debris.
Environmental	Rapid Decline in Biodiversity	Swift and significant reduction in the variety and abundance of species within a specific ecosystem or across the planet, often resulting from human activities, habitat destruction, pollution, and other factors.
Environmental	Shortages of Natural Resources	Depletion of high-value natural resources like oil, gas, minerals and timber, as well as mismanagement and competition over diminishing renewable resources, such as land and water, aggravated by environmental degradation, population growth and climate change.
Environmental	Space-Based Event	Natural or technological occurrences originating in or affecting outer space (e.g., solar flares, geomagnetic storms, or asteroid impacts) that have a significant and potentially severe impact on Earth or its systems, causing substantial disruptions to satellite communications, power grids, or other critical infrastructure on Earth.
Political	Collapse of Multilateral Institutions	Weakening and degradation of organizations and their collective action to resolve problems that are bigger than their individual efforts could tackle (e.g., global challenges like climate change and health crises), despite being foundational pillars of the international system established in the post-WW2 era.
Political	Collapse of Rule of Law and Massive Violations of Human Rights	Breakdown in international legal regimes and widespread disregard for basic human rights.
Political	State Sovereignty Erosion	Breakdown or failure of a government or political system to fulfill its basic functions, such as maintaining law and order, providing essential services, or representing its citizens effectively.
Political	Geopolitical Tensions	Significant changes in the global political landscape, involving alterations in power dynamics, alliances, and strategic interests among nations.
Political	Large-Scale War	Conflict of significant magnitude involving widespread and substantial military engagements, potentially waged within a country or between nations or coalitions, with extensive geopolitical, economic, and societal consequences.
Political	Misinformation and Disinformation	False or misleading information, with misinformation being inaccuracies spread without harmful intent, and disinformation being intentionally false or deceptive information circulated with the aim of causing harm or manipulating perceptions.
Political	Weapons of Mass Destruction	Atomic explosive weapons, radioactive material weapons, lethal chemical and biological weapons, and any weapons developed in the future which may have characteristics comparable in destructive effect to those of the atomic bomb or other weapons mentioned above. (UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific)
Societal	Biorisks	The risk posed to human, animal, plant, or environmental health, by outbreaks of disease of natural, accidental, or deliberate origin.
Societal	Collapse of Social Cohesion	Heightened social discord, surge in violent criminal activities, victimization of minority groups, breaches of human rights, and, in the end, the eruption of violent confrontations.
Societal	Mass Movement of People	Large-scale movement of people driven by factors like economic pursuits, escaping poverty, violence, war, persecution, climate change, and natural disasters, encompassing both voluntary and forced movement.
Societal	New Pandemic	The global spread of a pathogen or variant that infects human populations with limited or no immunity through sustained and high transmissibility from person to person, overwhelming health systems with severe morbidity and high mortality.
Societal	Proliferation of Non-State Actors (incl. criminal and terrorist groups)	Widespread growth in the number, influence, and activities of entities that operate outside the control or governance of traditional nation-states, could include terrorist and criminal organizations exerting considerable influence in various sectors, beyond the conventional structures of national governments.
Societal	Rise in Inequalities	Rise in disparity in opportunity and access based on income, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and capacity to use digital assets.
Technological	Breakdown in Cybersecurity	Widespread and systemic failures in safeguarding digital systems, infrastructure, networks, and data from unauthorized access, attacks, malicious use and exploitation.
Technological	Geoengineering Disasters	Large-scale manipulation of planetary processes to control and modify Earth's climate or weather.
Technological	Negative Outcomes of AI and Frontier Technologies	Adverse effects, whether intentional or unintentional, resulting from progress in AI and related technological capabilities—such as generative AI—on societies and ecosystems. These impacts may include, but are not limited to, increasing inequality, bias, conflicts and misinformation issues.
Technological	Technology-Driven Power Concentration	The growing centralization and consolidation of influence, control, and authority facilitated by advancements in technology, as well as the control over resources, influence and power that can be accumulated in the hands of private companies.

ANNEX 2: GLOBAL RISK REPORT **SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

The final analytical sample of the global risk survey comprised 1,300 respondents from all regions of the world: 80 UN Member State representatives and 1,220 other stakeholders across the remaining stakeholder groups.

"Global risk" was defined throughout the survey as an uncertain event or a condition that would have a significant negative impact on a large portion of humanity and the planet.

Stakeholder Groups

The survey targeted five main stakeholder groups that were chosen to capture diversity and expertise in risk perceptions.

Survey Implementation

The Global Risk Survey was conducted through an online survey platform, between February 2026 and April 2026. The survey comprised three main sections: Respondent Demographics, Global Risk Outlook and Perception, and Global Risk Preparedness.

Section 1: Respondent Demographics

This section of the survey asked respondents to provide their demographic details, used primarily to compare stakeholder groups and regional differences. All responses were kept anonymous, de-identified, and confidential. Questions in this section included:

- Nationality and country of residence or representation
- Domain(s) of expertise
- Type of organization (e.g., UN Member States, Private Sector Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, etc.)

Table 3: Stakeholder group definitions

Stakeholder	Definition
UN Member States	Government officials from the 193 UN Member States
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Non-governmental organizations accredited with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), including non-profit organizations and under-represented communities such as women and youth groups
Private Sector Organizations	Members of private or for-profit organizations recognized by the UN Global Compact
Risk Experts and Academia	Civil society actors or members of private organizations specializing in risks across different industries (e.g., banking, political risk) and academic affiliates of tertiary education institutions specializing in risk across different disciplines
International Organizations	Employees at international organizations

Section 2: Global Risk Outlook and Perception

1) **Likelihood** asked respondents to rate how likely each of the 28 risks was to negatively impact a large portion of humanity by 2050. Respondents were provided with a Likert scale of 1 to 7 with the following anchors: (1) Extremely unlikely, (4) Neither likely nor unlikely, and (7) Extremely likely.

2) **Imminence** asked respondents when they believed that each of the 28 risks would have a significant negative impact on a large portion of humanity. Respondents were provided with the following options: (1) 0-12 months, (2) In 1-7 years, (3) In 8-15 years, (4) In 16-25 years, and (5) After 2050.

3) **Severity** asked respondents how severe the impacts of each of the 28 risks would be if the risk were to occur by 2050. Respondents were provided with a Likert scale of 1 to 7, with the following anchors: (1) No impact at all, and (7) Extremely severe impact.

4) **Risk Prioritization** asked respondents to pick and rank five risks in order of which they believed should receive highest priority for action by multilateral institutions.

5) **Risk Interconnections** presented 5 randomly-assigned risks from the total list of 28 risks to respondents and asked them to identify how each of those risks could be connected to other global risks. This same subset of risks would remain consistent for all lines of risk inquiry in Section 3. For each risk, respondents were asked to identify: (i) One other risk that is most likely to lead to or cause this risk and (ii) One risk that is most likely to occur as a result of this risk.

Section 3: Global Risk Preparedness

1) **Risk Preparedness: Identification** asked respondents to rate the ability of multilateral institutions to identify the emergence of each of five randomly-assigned risks before it posed a significant threat using a Likert scale of 1 to 7, with the following anchors: (1) Not at all, and (7) Very able.

2) **Risk Preparedness: Reduction** asked respondents to rate the ability of multilateral institutions to reduce the likelihood of each of their five assigned risks occurring on a Likert scale of 1 to 7, where (1) indicates Not at all, and (7) Very able.

3) **Preparedness: Funding gap** asked respondents

whether there are funding gaps in addressing global risks in relation to Risk identification; Risk mitigation / reduction; Disaster response; and Disaster recovery / reconstruction. The current level of funding globally was assessed using a Likert scale of 1 to 7, from (1) Extremely inadequate to (7) Extremely excessive.

4) **Risk Governance: Actions** asked respondents to select up to two forms of stakeholder action that can best address each of their five assigned risks. Options included: Unilateral, bilateral and multilateral action by governments, action by civil society, private sector, individuals, and subnational governments.

5) **Risk Governance: Barriers** asked respondents to select up to two top barriers that impede the effective addressing of each of their five assigned risks. Options included: Inadequate data and information, Insufficient finance options, and Lack of political consensus.

Data Cleaning

A total of 2,701 responses to the GRS were received. From these, 1,300 responses were retained for analysis, while 1,401 were removed using the following data cleaning criteria:

1. Responses were removed if respondents did not give consent to proceed with the survey. 611 responses were deleted from this step.

2. Responses with less than the minimally required completion past the perception of risk likelihood and severity section were removed. A pairwise deletion rule (i.e., keeping the response even if the respondent did not finish all survey questions) was applied to keep the maximum amount of information from all survey responses. 790 responses were deleted from this step.

Respondent Profiles

The 2026 survey data encompassed a broad age distribution, ranging from individuals in their early 20s to those in their late 80s, reflecting the broad range of life experiences and professional perspectives represented among respondents. This distribution closely mirrors the 2024 profile, indicating consistency in the seniority and professional experience of the respondent pool across both rounds.

Gender representation in the survey was reasonably balanced, with 716 respondents (55.1%) identifying as male, 553 respondents (42.5%) as female, and 31 respondents (2.4%) preferring not to specify. Compared to 2024, the 2026 sample saw a modest increase in female representation (40.1% to 42.5%) and a corresponding decrease in male representation (59.2% to 55.1%), reflecting a slightly more balanced gender composition in this round.

The survey achieved a broad geographic distribution across SDG-defined regions, with representation from all seven major world regions. Europe and Northern America remained the largest regional grouping, with 654 respondents (50.3%), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa with 215 respondents (16.5%). Central and Southern Asia contributed 97 respondents (7.5%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean with 95 respondents (7.3%) and Northern Africa and Western Asia with 92 respondents (7.1%). Eastern and South-Eastern Asia was represented by 87 respondents (6.7%), and Oceania by 60 respondents (4.6%). Compared to the 2024 round, notable shifts include an increase in Oceanian representation (from 2.4% to 4.6%) and a modest decline in Sub-Saharan African representation (19.7% to 16.5%), while Europe and Northern America saw a marginal increase in proportional share (from 46.3% to 50.3%).

The survey engaged five principal stakeholder groups, comprising the following breakdown: 80 official respondents from UN Member States (6.2%), 433 respondents (33.3%) from Civil Society Organizations, 152 respondents (11.7%) from Private Sector, 262 respondents (20.2%) classified as Experts, and 368 respondents (28.3%) from International Organizations. There were five respondents (0.4%) who did not fall exclusively within any of the predetermined stakeholder groups and were therefore classified as "Others."

Data Analysis

The responses from the Global Risk Survey were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods tailored to the design of each survey question. Table 4 provides a summary of the treatment methods applied to analyze respondent characteristics, risk perceptions, prioritization, interconnections, preparedness, funding adequacy, and governance actions and barriers.

Table 4: Summary of data treatment by survey section

Survey Section	Question(s)	Analysis
Demographics	**Primary nationality/country of residence or representation**	Descriptive statistics Used as variable for sub-group heterogeneity analyses
	Organization type	Descriptive statistics Used as variable for sub-group heterogeneity analyses
Global Risk Outlook and Perception	**Likelihood** **Severity**	Statistical analysis of continuous variables with scale 1 to 7 Compounded variable for defining "risk importance"
	Imminence	Descriptive analysis Used as a categorical variable to indicate the imminence of a risk We also used group mean to compute an alternative continuous measure of imminence
	Risk Prioritization	Computation of sum of votes, with weights (top 1 = 5 points, top 2 = 4 points, ..., and top 5 = 1 point; any risk not selected will receive 0 point), as a proxy for risk prioritization
	Risk Interconnections	Network analysis Computation of risk closeness measures (e.g., degree centrality)
Global Risk Preparedness	**Risk Preparedness: Identification** **Risk Preparedness: Reduction**	Statistical analysis of continuous variables with scale 1 to 7 Average of the 2 preparedness measures was used to define "risk preparedness"
	Preparedness: Funding Gap	Statistical analysis of variables with scale 1 to 7
	Risk Governance: Barriers	Computation of sum of votes, statistical breakdown
	Risk Governance: Actions	Computation of sum of votes, statistical breakdown

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