

'Digital divide' still wide in developing world, study finds

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This photo taken on October 25, 2010 shows Nepalese girls surfing the internet in the village of Nagi, some 200 kms west of Kathmandu. Most developing countries are still struggling to bridge the "digital divide" limiting access to computers and the Internet for low-income citizens, a study showed Wednesday.

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The study for the World Economic Forum placed Finland at the top of its "networked readiness index" which measures a country's ability to make use of information technology for growth and well-being.

In second place in the index was Singapore, followed by Sweden, the Netherlands and Norway.

The United States ranked ninth, with a strong [technology infrastructure](#) offset by a "political and regulatory environment" which limits the benefits of technology, the study found.

The report said large developing nations, including China, Russia and Brazil were lagging in these efforts.

"Several developing countries—notably in Africa, but also in Latin America and Southeast Asia—continue to show low values of connectivity with low level of Internet usage and limited development of e-commerce," said Benat Bilbao-Osorio, an economist at the [World Economic Forum](#).

"Their struggle to upgrade digital connectivity means they are losing out on all the social and economic rewards that go along with better ICT (information and communications technology) infrastructure."

China's ranking fell seven spots from last year to 58th, the report said, adding that "the sustained [rapid economic growth](#) of past years in some of these countries may be in jeopardy unless the right investments are made in ICT, skills and innovation."

Among the other BRICS countries, Russia rose two spots to 54th, Brazil increased five places to 65th, India edged up one spot to 68th and South Africa two spots to 70th.

"This report demonstrates that economies that fail to implement comprehensive national broadband strategies risk losing ground in [global competitiveness](#) and may fall behind in the delivery of [societal benefits](#) from ICTs," said Robert Pepper of [Cisco Systems](#), a sponsor of the study.

Among the 144 countries studied, Burundi ranked last, behind Yemen, Algeria and Haiti.

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