World Future Skills Index

New Zealand Spotlight

Transforming higher education for the skills economy

Skills Fit | Academic Readiness | Future of Work | Economic Transformation

Higher education's role in future workforce readiness

Welcome to the New Zealand Spotlight on the QS World Future Skills Index, where we explore higher education's critical role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow. This tailored resource empowers you to analyse New Zealand's future skills supply and demand, benchmark key industry jobs and skills gaps against over 80 countries, and align your higher education system with the skills training required for economic transformation.

By 2030, an estimated 375 million workers will need to switch occupational categories, requiring tailored reskilling initiatives and modular, lifelong learning opportunities.

Source: Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained report from McKinsey

The QS World Future Skills Index in numbers

190+
countries analysed

4
indicators, informed by 13 sub-indicators

280m+
job postings assessed

5m+
employer skill demands reviewed

5,000+
universities measured

17.5m+
research papers examined

How to use the QS World Future Skills Index

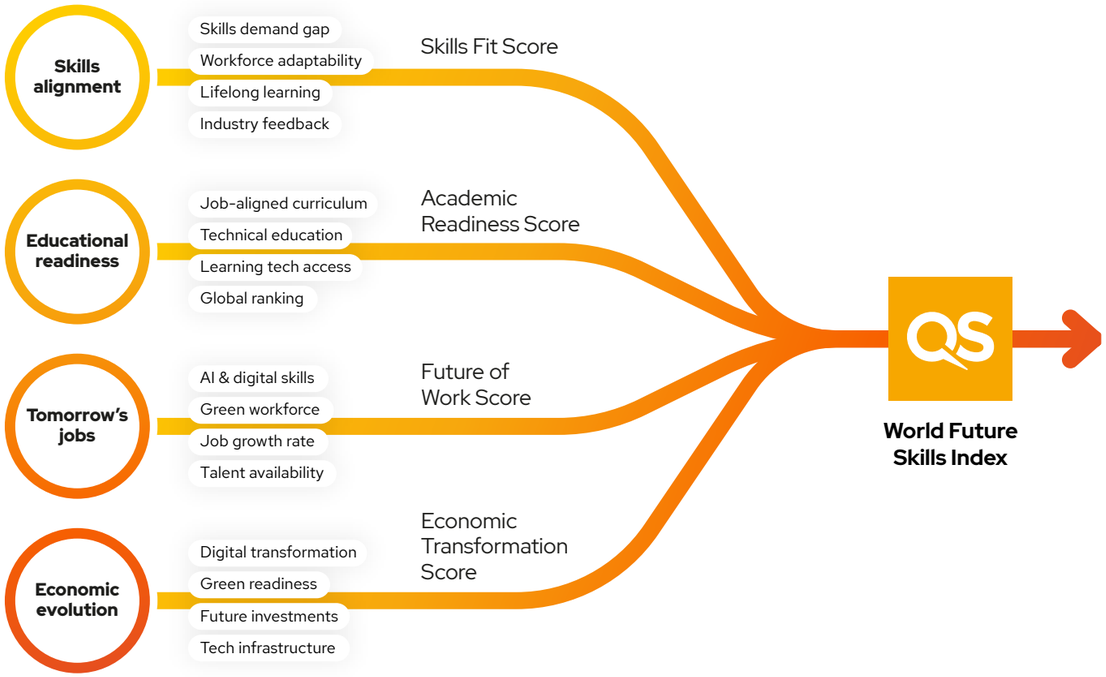
Analyse
Assess your future skills supply and demand imbalance

Benchmark
Identify and close key industry jobs and skills gaps in comparison to other countries/regions

Align
Align your curricula to nurture the necessary future skills and reduce the risk of workforce displacement

The QS World Future Skills Index is designed to assess how prepared countries are to tackle the shifting demands of the global workforce, particularly in the context of digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the broader economic changes impacting jobs.

Skills like AI proficiency, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability will form the bedrock of the industries of tomorrow. Countries that fail to adapt risk losing their competitive edge and missing opportunities for economic growth.



The QS World Future Skills Index uses data from over 280 million job postings via QS 1Mentor, the QS Global Employer Survey, and economic and demographic statistics from the World Bank Group. The Index assesses countries across four key indicators: Skills Fit, Academic Readiness, Future of Work, and Economic Transformation. Each indicator plays a vital role in providing a comprehensive view of a country's preparedness to thrive in an increasingly skills-driven global economy.

QS World Future Skills Index indicators

Skills Fit

The Skills Fit indicator measures how well countries are equipping graduates with the skills that employers desire. This is assessed by determining the gap between what employers find important and their level of satisfaction with the skills provided by graduates.

This is done using data from the QS Global Employer Survey, the largest of its kind, and data from the World Bank Group. Since 2021, over 100,000 employers have rated the importance of certain skills and their satisfaction in their graduate hires.

Future of Work

The Future of Work indicator evaluates a country's readiness to recruit for the skills needed in the jobs of tomorrow. Specifically, it measures how well the job market is prepared to meet the growing demand for digital, AI, and green skills, all of which are becoming critical as economies transition towards technology-driven and sustainable industries.

Academic Readiness

This dimension measures how well a country is prepared for the future of work. We look at the number of universities assessed for the QS World University Rankings by Subject, and how they perform.

We then measure this in tandem with population size – if a country has a large population but few well-ranked institutions, for example, the country will be penalised.

Economic Transformation

Economic Transformation uses a weighted formula to assess a country's readiness to support the growth and future of work and skills by examining various key indicators. The Index highlights whether a country has the infrastructure, investment power, and talent available to transition to industries driven by AI, digital transformation, green technologies, and high-skilled work, using data from the World Bank Group, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Education Policy Institute.

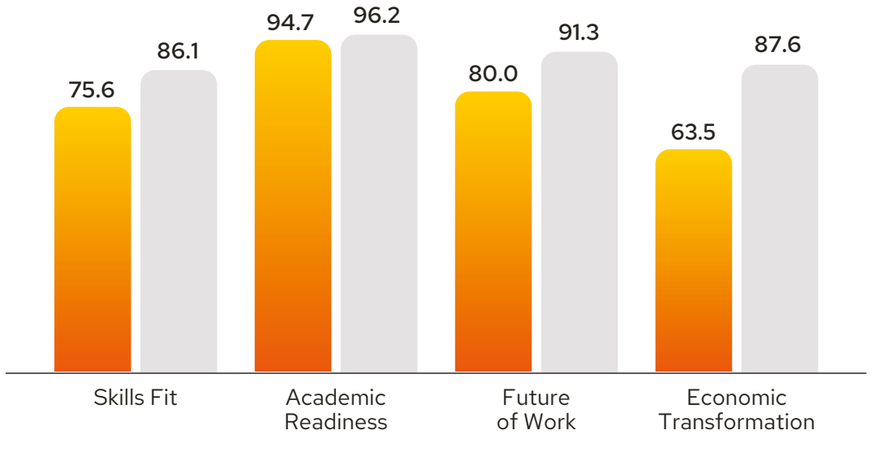
New Zealand | Performance overview

New Zealand is building a strong future talent foundation, shaped by high-quality education, a values-driven workforce, and growing capability in sustainability-aligned sectors. With excellent Academic Readiness (94.7) and solid Skills Fit (75.6), the country is well positioned to lead on green and ethical innovation. Future of Work (80.0) performance signals that employer demand for future skills is strong—particularly in sustainability-linked fields. However, Economic Transformation (63.5) lags behind peer OECD countries, driven by low Economic Capacity (32.1) and limited momentum in research commercialisation.

Compared with economies like South Korea, New Zealand faces the challenge of translating academic and workforce strength into larger-scale industrial growth. A key priority will be to activate underutilised talent through expanded innovation ecosystems, deeper business-academic collaboration, and targeted investment in R&D and infrastructure.

Overall score: **78.5/100**

QS World Future Skills Index
New Zealand performance vs G7 average



Skills Fit
75.6/100

Skills Fit measures the alignment between workforce skills and employer needs. It highlights how effectively education systems prepare graduates for key industries, especially in emerging fields like AI, green technology, and digital innovation. Addressing gaps here boosts employability, drives economic transformation, and ensures the workforce remains competitive internationally.

Academic Readiness
94.7/100

Academic Readiness reflects the capacity of a country's higher education system to equip students with relevant skills for future jobs. A robust system fosters innovation, aligns curricula with industry demands. This ensures graduates are not only employable but also capable of adapting to a rapidly changing global economy

Future of Work
80.0/100

Future of Work assesses a country's preparedness for jobs of the future, focusing on adaptability to technological and industrial changes. It reflects innovation, R&D investments, and sustainable practices in education. Higher education plays a vital role in fostering a future-ready workforce equipped with the skills required for evolving global industries.

Economic Transformation
63.5/100

Economic Transformation examines the interplay between education, workforce skills, and industrial growth. Higher education underpins this by driving productivity, innovation, and sustainability. Universities that align their programmes with industry needs not only strengthen national competitiveness but also ensure a balance between economic momentum and workforce adaptability.

New Zealand | Detailed performance

Skills Fit

	Overall Skills Fit Score	Adaptive Life Long Skills	Human-centred Leadership	Entrepreneurial and Innovative Mindset	Sustainable and Ethical Workforce
G7	86.1	86.9	88.5	84.0	86.0
OECD	76.1	76.2	78.1	75.8	75.8
New Zealand	75.6	75.3	75.3	79.5	76.1
G20	71.5	72.8	73.9	69.7	70.4
EU	69.6	69.7	71.4	69.6	69.0
APAC	69.1	70.2	72.2	66.6	67.8
ASEAN	57.3	58.4	60.5	55.1	55.3
BRICS	56.7	58.7	59.4	54.4	54.5
Latin America	50.0	51.0	50.4	50.3	51.3
MENA	42.6	43.7	45.7	40.2	41.0
Africa	28.0	28.9	29.4	27.1	27.5

QS Analysis

New Zealand's Skills Fit score reflects a workforce rooted in ethical values and emerging entrepreneurial capabilities. Sustainable and Ethical Workforce (76.1) and Human-centred Leadership (75.3) highlight a people-focused, socially aware talent pipeline. SEntrepreneurial and Innovative Mindset (79.5) is also strong, indicating that graduates are equipped to think critically and drive change. However, compared with peers like Canada (90.9), there is still room to enhance adaptability and applied skills through stronger experiential learning and lifelong upskilling pathways. Embedding cross-sector collaboration and employer-led training into education systems will help ensure these skills translate into scalable innovation and real-world impact.

Note: The Skills Fit score is derived from over 5 million skills nominations, reflecting insights from more than 100,000 employer responses to the QS Global Employer Survey over the past four years. Employers identified key skills they value and their satisfaction levels. By analysing this data at the country level, and integrating it with the World Bank's Human Capital Index, the QS Insights and Consulting team developed the final scores. Skills nominated by employers have been grouped based on the findings.

Academic Readiness

	Overall Academic Readiness Score	AI	Digital	Green
G7	96.2	90.8	91.0	91.6
New Zealand	94.7	95.5	95.9	96.1
G20	90.2	82.3	82.9	82.9
BRICS	88.2	77.0	76.6	76.9
OECD	87.0	86.2	86.4	86.4
APAC	86.1	80.5	80.7	81.7
EU	81.9	83.3	82.2	81.2
ASEAN	78.7	78.2	77.8	79.1
Latin America	76.7	73.4	76.6	77.3
MENA	58.1	61.3	60.0	59.4
Africa	39.1	38.6	38.4	38.6

QS Analysis

With Academic Readiness at 94.7, New Zealand stands out globally for the quality of its university instruction in AI (95.5), Digital (95.9), and Green (96.1) disciplines. This academic excellence reflects deep integration of future-focused topics into higher education. New Zealand's institutions also benefit from strong international linkages and alignment with sustainability agendas. However, compared to nations like Singapore or the UK, where research commercialisation and academic-industry collaboration are more fully embedded, there is untapped potential to convert teaching strength into broader economic dividends. Prioritising applied research, expanding entrepreneurial education, and aligning subject strengths with labour market needs will be crucial to bridging this gap.

Note: This chart draws on data from the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, analysing over 5,000 universities globally. The Academic Readiness score is calculated using the median subject rankings score for each country, adjusted for performance in key areas such as AI, digital, and green-related disciplines. Population size and the number of universities ranked are used as weighting factors to ensure a balanced assessment of scale and quality. This provides a comprehensive view of how effectively higher education systems are preparing for future workforce demands.

Future of Work

	Overall Future of Work Score	AI	Digital	Green
G7	91.3	90.7	83.8	85.2
G20	84.3	78.9	75.1	79.7
APAC	82.9	76.1	74.6	77.1
ASEAN	80.1	69.5	71.4	75.3
New Zealand	80.0	70.6	63.7	82.6
BRICS	76.1	71.3	60.2	71.5
Latin America	73.0	57.6	63.7	69.7
OECD	72.9	68.2	63.9	60.9
EU	68.2	64.5	57.1	53.7
Africa	54.2	38.4	49.6	38.9
MENA	49.9	31.9	40.2	40.6

QS Analysis

Scoring 80.0, New Zealand's Future of Work performance suggests that employer demand for the skills of the future is high, but not yet keeping pace with the high calibre of graduates being produced. Compared with economies like Australia (91.0) or Singapore (92.2), there is a mismatch: the supply of future-ready skills exceeds current labour market demand. Addressing this gap will require greater employer awareness and structural incentives to drive digital and green transformation across industries. Expanding work-based learning, co-designed certifications, and SME engagement can help ensure that the country's skilled graduates access opportunities that that make full use of their capabilities.

Note: The Future of Work Score measures the extent to which future-focused skills—such as digital, AI, and green competencies—have permeated global job advertisements compared to traditional skillsets. This score is derived from an analysis of over 280 million job postings worldwide, leveraging the QS proprietary skills taxonomy. Over 9,500 emerging skills were identified and benchmarked against conventional skills, providing a clear indicator of how deeply future-oriented capabilities are being prioritised by employers in the global labour market.

Economic Transformation

	Overall Economic Transformation Score	Economic Capacity	Workforce Readiness	Future-oriented Innovation and Sustainability
G7	87.6	70.7	69.1	68.3
OECD	77.3	47.0	67.1	64.7
EU	71.6	40.9	64.5	59.0
G20	70.2	60.2	62.1	49.2
APAC	65.1	57.4	58.9	42.2
New Zealand	63.5	32.1	61.8	47.2
BRICS	61.6	61.2	54.0	32.8
ASEAN	44.9	42.3	46.8	27.4
MENA	40.7	33.7	43.6	29.8
Latin America	33.6	24.6	47.4	27.1
Africa	25.6	26.1	31.7	25.4

QS Analysis

New Zealand's Economic Transformation score is the lowest of its four indicator scores. Economic Capacity (32.1) is notably low for an advanced economy, suggesting constrained investment, R&D intensity, and industrial scale. Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability (47.2) and Workforce Readiness (61.8) reflect a good but not yet fully activated innovation ecosystem. Australia (90.6) is more advanced in converting academic and skills strengths into economic growth. Boosting private sector R&D investment (currently around 1.5% of GDP), incentivising university-led commercialisation, and building cross-sector growth hubs will be vital to lifting New Zealand's innovation-driven economy.

Note: The Economic Transformation indicator is built on three core dimensions: Economic Capacity, Workforce Readiness, and Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability. It combines data on GDP growth, labour productivity, employment rates, R&D investment, and infrastructure development. These indicators are weighted and benchmarked globally to assess a country's ability to adapt to skills-driven industrial change, with a focus on AI, digital, and green industries. The methodology ensures a comprehensive view of how effectively economic fundamentals and future-focused investments align with evolving workforce demands.

New Zealand | Full results summary

Note: The scores reflect the final results of the QS World Future Skills Index.
Categories are organised alphabetically by economy for clarity and ease of comparison.

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
United States	94.4	98.2	100.0	97.9	**97.6**
United Kingdom	100.0	100.0	95.6	92.7	**97.1**
Germany	89.2	99.6	94.7	94.7	**94.6**
Australia	87.2	98.9	96.5	90.6	**93.3**
Canada	90.9	97.8	97.4	78.1	**91.0**
Netherlands	88.6	99.3	90.4	81.2	**89.9**
Switzerland	80.7	97.1	82.6	96.8	**89.3**
France	84.8	92.6	91.3	84.3	**88.2**
Singapore	83.2	91.7	92.2	85.4	**88.1**
South Korea	84.4	88.4	76.5	100.0	**87.3**
China	78.5	93.9	87.8	88.5	**87.2**
Spain	76.4	96.3	93.0	70.8	**84.1**
Israel	70.6	93.0	73.0	98.9	**83.9**
Sweden	80.4	95.1	72.2	86.4	**83.5**
Japan	73.4	87.9	74.7	95.8	**83.0**
Belgium	72.4	95.9	71.3	91.6	**82.8**
Ireland	81.8	95.5	86.1	67.7	**82.8**
Denmark	73.0	96.7	66.1	93.7	**82.4**
Hong Kong SAR	77.0	98.6	69.5	80.2	**81.3**
Italy	70.3	97.4	85.2	69.7	**80.7**
Finland	76.1	93.4	62.6	87.5	**79.9**
New Zealand	75.6	94.7	80.0	63.5	**78.5**
Norway		94.3	56.5	83.3	**78.0**
Poland	68.5	85.3	86.9	68.7	**77.3**
India	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	**76.6**
Portugal	71.0	92.1	66.9	76.0	**76.5**
Czech Republic	72.4	77.5	82.6	71.8	**76.1**
Austria	66.5	90.8	64.3	82.2	**75.9**
United Arab Emirates	71.6	90.3	77.4	60.4	**74.9**

New Zealand | Full results summary

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Greece	62.3	85.9	65.2	72.9	71.6
Brazil	44.1	83.1	78.2	77.0	70.6
Malaysia	64.0	91.2	88.6	35.4	69.8
Thailand	58.1	81.4	80.8	52.0	68.1
Mexico	54.8	80.8	98.2	37.5	67.8
Lithuania	61.4	87.4	52.2	66.6	66.9
Hungary	59.3	84.2	68.6	54.1	66.6
Russia	73.4	84.8	33.8	73.9	66.5
Saudi Arabia	56.9	82.5	73.8	51.0	66.1
Türkiye	62.1	73.3	60.0	64.5	65.0
Colombia	58.3	82.0	89.5	27.0	64.2
Costa Rica		67.5	79.1	45.8	64.1
Argentina	57.8	83.7	84.3	23.9	62.4
Philippines	47.6	66.6	93.8	40.6	62.2
Estonia		70.1	53.0	61.4	61.5
Kazakhstan	67.8	75.5	40.8	59.3	60.9
Egypt	45.4	76.9	75.6	44.7	60.6
Indonesia	60.0	74.0	67.8	39.5	60.3
Lebanon	45.9	86.4	46.9		59.7
Chile	63.1	88.9	70.4	13.5	59.0
Qatar	45.5	79.5	59.1	47.9	58.0
Romania	43.0	72.5	58.2	48.9	55.7
Vietnam	58.1	74.7	57.4	31.2	55.4
Jordan	49.2	78.2	49.5	41.6	54.6
Slovenia		49.1	35.6	79.1	54.6
Bulgaria	37.6	56.0	61.7	57.2	53.1
Peru	51.0	80.1	54.7	26.0	53.0
Latvia	56.4	60.7	46.1	46.8	52.5
South Africa	28.3	89.4	81.7	10.4	52.4

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Bahrain	47.2	62.7	33.0	55.2	49.6
Ukraine	57.9	71.8	51.3	15.6	49.1
Bangladesh	39.1	65.7	42.6		49.1
Luxembourg		54.8	47.8	43.7	48.7
Kuwait	36.3	69.3	40.0		48.5
Belarus	57.6	40.4	29.5	65.6	48.3
Iceland		31.6	20.0	89.5	47.0
Pakistan	35.7	78.9	63.4	4.1	45.5
Croatia		36.4	35.6	62.5	44.8
Uruguay	40.6	59.5	60.8	17.7	44.7
Brunei Darussalam	29.8	70.9		30.2	43.6
Ecuador	30.6	64.8	41.7	34.3	42.8
Armenia	25.3		45.2	50.0	40.2
Uzbekistan	48.1	57.2	29.5	16.6	37.9
Cyprus	45.2	44.2	37.4	18.7	36.4
Azerbaijan	31.8	50.6	27.8	29.1	34.8
Oman	32.5	42.5	29.5	33.3	34.4
Panama	24.2		50.4	28.1	34.2
Sri Lanka	43.5		42.6	6.2	30.8
Morocco	17.0		53.8	20.8	30.5
Tunisia		29.0	37.4	19.7	28.7
Algeria	21.3		22.6	32.2	25.4
Tajikistan	16.7		26.9	21.8	21.8

*Where a country lacks an indicator score, this reflects insufficient data available to evaluate overall performance

13

New Zealand | Conclusion

New Zealand combines exceptional Academic Readiness (94.7) with good Future of Work alignment (80.0), yet Economic Transformation (63.5) lags behind. The country produces future-ready talent—particularly in Green skills—but must strengthen employer engagement, innovation ecosystems, and R&D investment to turn academic strength into long-term economic impact.

Our analysis and recommendations:

1

Align graduate skills with market demand

Expand work-integrated learning and strengthen SME engagement to ensure future-ready graduates—especially in AI and Digital—find meaningful career pathways in high-impact sectors.

2

Boost research and innovation commercialisation

Increase public-private investment in applied R&D and incentivise universities to co-develop solutions with industry.

3

Expand green growth and sustainability ecosystems

Leverage New Zealand's leadership in Green skills to scale sustainable industries. Align environmental policy, skills development, and job creation to build a competitive green economy.

New Zealand | Future skills ecosystem

Your future workforce and skills partner

Connecting higher education, government policy, employer demands and student needs

Speak to your QS partnership director to gain access to more insight and advice.

Assess economic risk

We can help you analyse skills supply and demand by industry or region to identify skills shortages

Access data on the industries, occupations and skills driving growth to set your labour market strategy

Address skills gaps

Benchmark your skills shortages against peer nations to assess your relative risk

Identify the countries providing the most skills-aligned talent for your high-growth industries to set a talent attraction strategy

Align higher education with future skills

Assess the top performing universities within your country or region to deliver future skills ready graduates

Evaluate performance at the subject level to develop an internal benchmark and skills performance improvement strategy

Establish a future skills strategy for higher education institutions within your country or region, and enhance curricula and learning modes to deliver the skills of tomorrow

1

Assess economic risks: Analyse supply and demand imbalances to identify skill shortages and develop strategies to safeguard your economy against workforce misalignment.

2

Address skills gaps: Benchmark job and skill requirements globally to ensure graduates are equipped to meet industry needs and strengthen economic resilience.

3

Align higher education with future skills: Transform higher education to embed future skills, ensuring graduates contribute to innovation, economic growth, and reduced workforce displacement.

Read the full QS World Future Skills Index briefing paper

QS can help you transform insights into policy and policy into action.

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