
You're More Likely to Die in a Global Disaster Than a Car Crash

03/05/2016



It comes with the territory. While in the process of staying informed on all of the possible threats to civilization, you will inevitably run into fear-mongering claims that the sky is going to fall on our world tomorrow. These outlandish claims not only distract us from genuine threats, but they also make the prepper community look silly and paranoid to mainstream society.

However, there *are* real threats that we have to worry about. Real threats that the mainstream often thinks are just as crazy as the alarmist threats. Most people look at preppers and think that they're crazy for believing that civilization could be destroyed by many different threats, leading to the deaths of millions of people, but it's a very real possibility. It's worth preparing for.

As a matter of fact, you might be able to scientifically prove that it's worth preparing for.

See, most people would look at the countless threats to society, both the legitimate ones and the crazy ones, and just shrug their shoulders. "Why bother?" they would say, "why should I worry about this? It's probably going to kill everyone anyway, and there are already plenty of normal things I have to worry about, like cancer and house fires and car crashes. Why should I spend any time, energy, or money, worrying about a pandemic or a nuclear war, which is far less likely?"

But they should worry about it, because statistically speaking, those catastrophic threats are more likely to effect them than some of the more mundane threats, like the aforementioned car crashes. In fact, a recent study looked at different threats that could lead to the extinction of the human race, and compared their likelihood to the threat of dying in a car crash, and [the results were not what you might expect](#).

In its annual report on "global catastrophic risk," the nonprofit debuted a startling statistic: Across the span of their lives, the average American is more than five times likelier to die during a human-extinction event

than in a car crash.

Partly that's because the average person will probably not die in an automobile accident. Every year, one in 9,395 people die in a crash; that translates to [about a 0.01 percent chance](#) per year. But that chance compounds over the course of a lifetime. At life-long scales, one in 120 Americans die in an accident.

The risk of human extinction due to climate change—or an accidental nuclear war—is much higher than that. [The Stern Review](#), the U.K. government's premier report on the economics of climate change, estimated a 0.1 percent risk of human extinction every year. That may sound low, but it also adds up when extrapolated to century-scale. The Global Challenges Foundation estimates a 9.5 percent chance of human extinction within the next hundred years.

Somehow I doubt that climate change could come close to extinguishing humanity, but nuclear war is certainly capable wiping most of us out. And not only is that disaster becoming more likely due to current international tensions, but even during peace time there is always the threat of an accidental nuclear war.

But human extinction level events are hardly the only things we have to worry about. The Global Challenges Foundation also looked at disasters that could kill 10% or more of the population. Pandemics are the most likely to cause those kinds of deaths, but they also explored some of the threats that aren't talked about very often, like genetically engineered diseases, artificial intelligence, and geo-engineering.

Nearly all of the most threatening global catastrophic risks were unforeseeable a few decades before they became apparent. Forty years before the discovery of the nuclear bomb, few could have predicted that nuclear weapons would come to be one of the leading global catastrophic risks. Immediately after the Second World War, few could have known that catastrophic climate change, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence would come to pose such a significant threat.

Obviously it's difficult to put a precise statistic on these existential threats, some of which may or may not even happen. However, when you put the likelihood of all these disasters together, as well as the number casualties they could inflict, it's clear that they deserve just as much attention as anything else that might threaten your life.

So the next time someone tells you that you're crazy for preparing yourself for a global disaster, you can confidently assure them that it makes just as much sense as keeping a fire extinguishers in the kitchen, or wearing a seat-belt.

Joshua Krause was born and raised in the Bay Area. He is a writer and researcher focused on principles of self-sufficiency and liberty at [Ready Nutrition](#). You can follow Joshua's work at our [Facebook](#) page or on his personal [Twitter](#).