An index of the current health and growth prospects for the 3D printing market

For a second time the USA has topped the index. A continuation of size of market, maturity and growth keeps the USA number one in the market. Mexico, Japan and Italy are the only countries to move in the rankings compared to 2019, with all other countries maintaining their position. New to the index for 2021 are South Korea and Australia, these will be markets to watch to see their growth in the next 12 months.

In the past 12 months we have seen a slight increase in the number of businesses that have the technology fully embedded. Market education remains key to unlocking the full potential of 3D printing.

The importance of 3D printing is increasingly recognised within businesses, with over half now believing that 3D printing will become a priority for investment in the next 12 months. To drive this investment, knowledge within the market needs to strengthen and businesses need support to demonstrate ROI; case studies and factory walks could be key initiatives.

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Bringing concept designs to life remains the most commonly acknowledged benefit, but speed efficiencies and more effective ways of making jigs are also seen as benefits to many organisations.

The dominant materials used for 3D printing at present are plastics and polymers. Some are also printing with carbon fibre and composites of various kinds and, in a small minority of instances, we are seeing increases in printing with metals and even with materials as unusual and specialist as wood composites.