

## How humans might play a role in our own extinction

[W]hat if human extinction was less a cinematic scenario, and instead, a looming reality? That might seem like a sensational question, but in fact, dozens of researchers around the world spend their days grappling with this very possibility, and how we might avoid it.

Their task isn't easy. There are multiple theories around what might ultimately cause human extinction — everything from alien invasions to catastrophic asteroid strikes. But among those investigating this question, there's a general consensus that some risks to human life are more plausible than others. In the field, researchers have a name for these: They call them “existential risks.”

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So what if humans are their own biggest extinction risk?

That's a focus of Sabin Roman's research. As a research associate at the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk, he models societal evolution and collapse, looking at past civilizations including the Roman Empire and [Easter Island](#). As Roman sees it, the majority of existential risks are “self-created,” rooted in societies and the systems they produce. In his view, humanity's attraction to continuous growth leads to exploitation, planetary destruction and conflict. Ironically, that only increases some of the biggest threats we face today, and our vulnerability to them. “A bit too much hinges on perpetual economic growth. If we tried to optimize something else, that would be good!” he said.

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