Ithra Digital Wellbeing

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Country Report

Bangladesh

Country insights report 2024

sync

Bangladesh

Overall score
44.1 (out of 100)

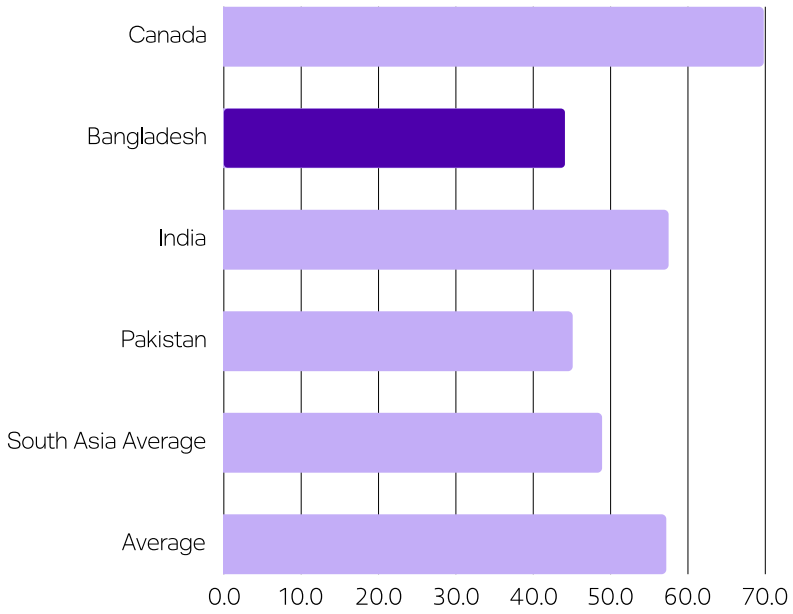
Placed
34th (out of 35)

Bangladesh signals the potential for substantial progress in the Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI). With a score of 44.1, it placed 34th out of 35 countries in the index. Notably strong in the information quality pillar, Bangladesh still has significant growth opportunities in both the sub-indices, "Capturing opportunities" and "Balancing needs," highlighting avenues for further development.

Bangladesh, with a DWI score of 44.1, falls below the global average of 57.2 and trails behind its South Asian peers where the regional average stands at 48.9. The scores in Capturing opportunities (44.8, 33rd) and Balancing needs (43.5, 34th) indicate areas for improvement. Bangladesh has the potential to enhance its digital wellbeing by focusing on seizing opportunities and achieving a better balance in meeting digital needs.

Comparative performance in the DWI

FIGURE 1



Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

The context of digital wellbeing in the country

While Bangladesh's digital landscape has potential for significant improvement, in the recent years the country has witnessed growing awareness of the significance of digital technology in promoting wellbeing. This awareness has led to the introduction of various initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall welfare of the population. In 2019, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) along with World Health Organization (WHO) instigated the formulation of a national digital health strategy. This significant initiative reflects a pivotal move toward harnessing technology to improve the accessibility, quality and affordability of healthcare services in the country. Ultimately, this initiative can contribute to the broader goal of fostering emotional, psychological and physical health while promoting personal safety in the digital world. However, the strategy has not been implemented yet.

Similarly, in 2021, the government established the Bangladesh Cybersecurity Strategy 2021-2025 in alignment with the four pillars of the Digital Bangladesh initiative, which are, "Digital Government, Human Resource Development, IT Industry Promotions, and Connectivity & Infrastructure." The initiative aims to achieve a secure Digital Bangladesh by enhancing governance, organizational management and cyber defence effectiveness, focusing on securing the digital ecosystem and improving operations across government, Critical Information Infrastructure (CII), and enterprises. This aligns with digital wellbeing principles, ensuring user safety and a harmonious online environment. Nevertheless, this is a fairly new initiative, so the benefits and outcomes associated with new policies and initiatives will only be realized a few years down the line. In the current scenario, Bangladesh's digital wellbeing environment showcases scope for considerable progress and development.

The country's strengths and areas for improvement

Under the Capturing Opportunities pillars, Bangladesh faces challenges with lower scores in social connectedness (54.9, 29th), access to services and goods (46.9, 29th) and Connectivity (62.8, 32nd), indicating a need for improvement in its digital infrastructure. The performance in the education and skills pillar (50.5, 34th) suggests room for further growth in providing better access to digital education resources. A score of 32.1 (34th) in entertainment and culture demonstrates the need for cultivating digital cultural engagement. Performance in work, productivity, and income pillar (21.3, 35th) highlight significant areas for growth, emphasizing the potential for leveraging digital tools more effectively for economic development.

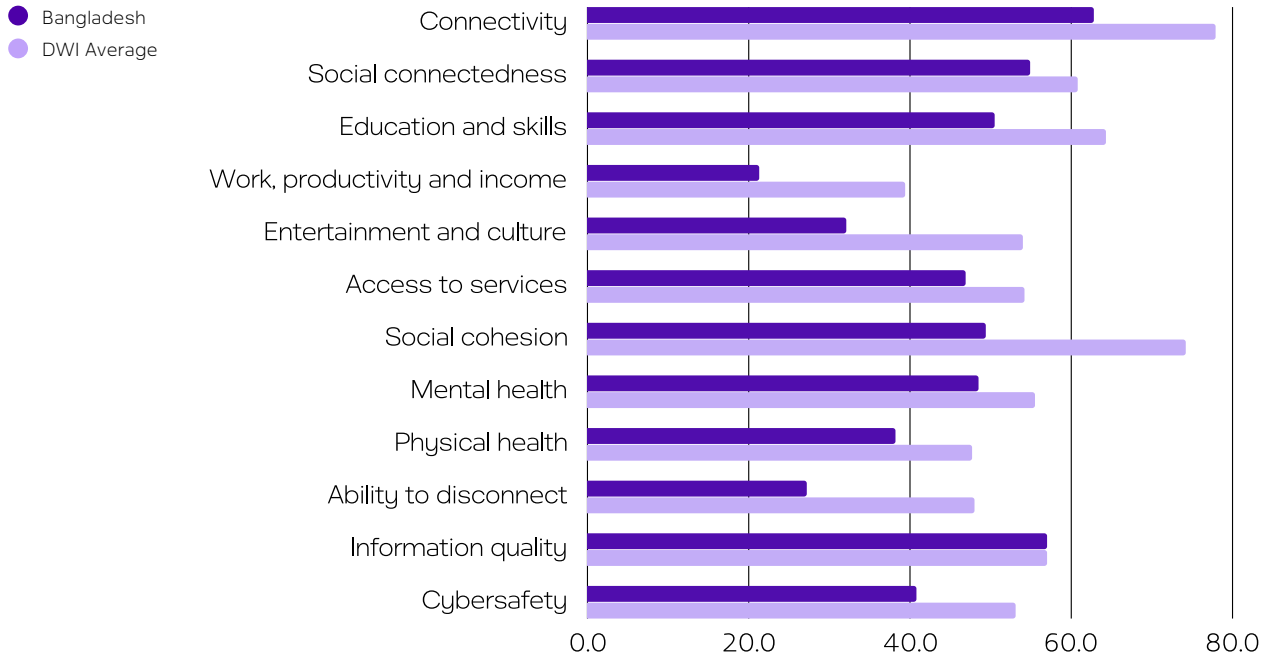
Examining the Balancing needs pillars, Bangladesh performs well in information quality (57, 15th), demonstrating a strong foundation in reliable digital information sources. However, challenges exist in the pillars of Mental health (48.5, 29th), physical health (38.2, 29th), social cohesion (49.4, 33rd) and the ability to disconnect (27.2, 33rd), indicating opportunities to bolster wellbeing and achieve a better work-life balance. Cybersafety pillar scores (40.8, 33rd) emphasize the need for strengthening online safety measures.

Bangladesh faces various challenges in promoting digital wellbeing. Emphasizing efforts to overcome these obstacles is crucial to cultivating a stronger and more balanced digital environment in the country.

FIGURE 2

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

Performance of Bangladesh by index pillars compared to DWI sample



Overall performance by index pillars

TABLE 5 Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

Dimensions	Score (0 to 100)	Placed (out of 35)	Key findings
Connectivity	62.8	32	Enhancing connectivity stands as a pivotal area for improvement in Bangladesh. With a score of 53.9, there is a pressing need to elevate internet access, specifically by increasing internet bandwidth to enhance the overall quality of internet penetration.
Social connectedness	54.9	29	Although the country performs well in technology-facilitated connectedness, with 80% of survey respondents utilizing technology to stay in touch with family and friends, there is much room for improvement in fostering active online engagement and enhancing social interaction platforms.
Education and skills	50.5	34	Digital education and skills empower individuals to harness the advantages of technology while also fostering awareness of its drawbacks. Bangladesh can improve on digital education provisions, encompassing initiatives that ensure internet access in schools and promote online learning.
Work, productivity and income	21.3	35	The results of the DWI study highlight the essential requirements for Bangladesh to enhance its digital work and productivity ecosystem. Policies regarding remote work, the development of a resilient digital workforce, and the promotion of technology-enabled work all require significant efforts for the country to make substantial strides in digital wellbeing.
Entertainment and culture	32.1	34	In the Entertainment and culture pillar, there is a vital need for Bangladesh to promote arts and culture through digital platforms. This includes fostering experiences in creating and sharing art digitally, emphasizing the importance of digital avenues for artistic expression.
Access to services and goods	46.9	29	Bangladesh stands to enhance its digital wellbeing and advancement considerably by improving access to e-services and goods, particularly in finance and commerce, through adoption of digital payments, ecommerce uptake and managing finance online.
Mental health	48.5	29	It is crucial to implement policy support aimed at improving mental health concerning digital technology where Bangladesh scores 33.5, along with provisions to maintain mental wellbeing. This is imperative as survey respondents indicate challenges in mental health due to digital technology, and the population spends a substantial amount of time online.
Physical health	38.2	29	The health of Bangladeshi citizens is adversely affected by the absence of supportive policies. This includes the lack of recommendations for healthy tech use and the incorporation of digital physical health aspects into education curricula.

Overall performance by index pillars (continued)

TABLE 5 Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

Dimensions	Score (0 to 100)	Placed (out of 35)	Key findings
Ability to disconnect	27.2	33	Ensuring citizens have the ability to disconnect is crucial in today's pervasive digital society. Bangladesh can enhance its digital wellbeing by prioritizing this aspect. Survey respondents also indicate room for improvement, highlighting the need to assist individuals in achieving a better work-life balance and adopting digital wellness measures.
Information quality	57.0	15	Bangladesh excels in information quality, thanks to its initiatives against fake news and the population's trust in online information. To strengthen this advantage, the country can integrate disinformation awareness into education curricula and educate people on the importance of verifying online information and the methods to do so effectively.
Cybersafety	40.8	33	While Bangladesh displays strength in cybersafety, with governance frameworks on data protection, consumer protection, and tools against cyberbullying, there is still room for improvement. Enhancing secure servers, governance frameworks for internet issues, and strengthening policies for the protection of personal data, children, and youth will contribute to creating a safer digital wellbeing environment.

Suggestions that may contribute to improvements across the digital ecosystem:

Enhancing digital workforce productivity

To enhance Bangladesh's digital workforce and economic prospects, authorities can focus on pivotal measures. Implementing robust remote work legislation is paramount to safeguard the rights and benefits of remote workers. Encouraging companies to adopt flexible working arrangements and investing in ICT skills development will boost workforce adaptability and digital literacy. Additionally, promoting digital entrepreneurship through streamlined processes for online business startups will contribute to economic growth and income generation in the digital sector.

Suggestions that may contribute to improvements across the digital ecosystem (continued)

Strengthening digital literacy in education
Authorities can prioritize initiatives to bolster digital literacy. This includes improving internet access in schools, fostering digital and ICT skills within the education system, and establishing a recognition framework for online micro-credentials. The emphasis should be on promoting the importance of technology in education and expanding online learning opportunities to create a more inclusive learning environment. Facilitating more collaborative organizations such as a2i which works with government, NGOs and private sector organizations to accelerate inclusive remote learning could go a long way in ensuring digital literacy.

Cultivating digital cultural engagement
There is an opportunity to cultivate digital cultural engagement. The focus can be on promoting government-supported incentives for digital cultural and artistic content, encouraging citizens to engage with and share artistic and cultural content digitally. Emphasizing digital entertainment, facilitating the discovery of offline events, and supporting travel planning through digital platforms will enhance cultural participation and leisure activities.

Advancing inclusive digital policies for social cohesion
Authorities can advance inclusive digital policies. This involves ensuring ICT accessibility measures for people with disabilities. Promoting digital literacy for all, particularly through inclusive remote learning initiatives, will contribute to narrowing gender and socio-economic disparities in digital usage. Policymakers can also explore strategies to increase internet coverage for a larger proportion of the population, fostering greater digital inclusion and socio-economic equity.

Enhancing digital wellbeing through better disconnect opportunities
It is important to prioritize measures that improve the work/study-life balance. Introducing the right to disconnect by law, implementing policies that ensure maintaining boundaries between work and personal life during remote work, and promoting digital wellness practices, such as regular breaks and exercise, will contribute to fostering a healthier and more balanced digital environment.

Strengthening cyber safety for a secure digital landscape
Authorities can focus on enhancing data safety policies and cybersecurity measures. This involves recognizing and implementing the right to disconnect by law, ensuring secure internet servers, and strengthening data protection. Policymakers can also address cybersafety concerns by enforcing strict laws, providing education on digital safety in curricula, and establishing efficient reporting mechanisms for online abuse. These measures will collectively contribute to a safer and more secure online environment.

Expanding digital connectivity for inclusive access
Authorities can emphasize strategies to expand digital connectivity. This includes increasing internet penetration, especially in remote areas, and ensuring the affordability of internet facilities. Policymakers can also focus on improving international bandwidth to enhance the overall quality of internet services. By implementing policies that promote accessibility and affordability, Bangladesh can work towards creating a more connected and digitally inclusive society.

Global Digital Wellbeing Index Executive Summary

Digital technologies have reshaped how we connect, work, and perceive the world. As our dependence on these tools grows, so too does the need to understand and optimize the balance between technology use and wellbeing. The Global Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI) explores the foundational elements of digital wellbeing, acknowledging the complex and multifaceted dimensions involved. The DWI aims to stimulate global discussions, influence policymakers, and provide a benchmark for stakeholders to navigate the evolving landscape of digital wellbeing. It covers 35 countries and combines data from well-established secondary sources (e.g. UN, World Bank), a dedicated survey, and policy assessments into a framework that consists of 12 pillars, organized into two complementary components or sub-indices (1) balancing needs and (2) capturing opportunities. The DWI provides overall country-level scores out of 100, as well as scores for both components and for each of the 12 pillars (also out of 100).

In terms of overall scores on the index, Canada, Australia, Singapore, Estonia, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, the United States, and Italy do especially well. China stands out with a strong performance among middle-income countries. While wealthier countries achieve the best scores on average, having a higher income does not always guarantee a better performance: for example, China, Argentina, Colombia, Malaysia, Mexico, and Bulgaria achieve scores equal to or above the global average (57 out of 100). Across the entire sample, the pillars with the highest scores are connectivity (78) and social cohesion (74). Those with the lowest scores, requiring the most attention, are work, productivity and income (39), physical health (48), and the ability to disconnect (48). As highlighted throughout this report, each country has its relative digital wellbeing strengths as well as areas for growth and enhancement.

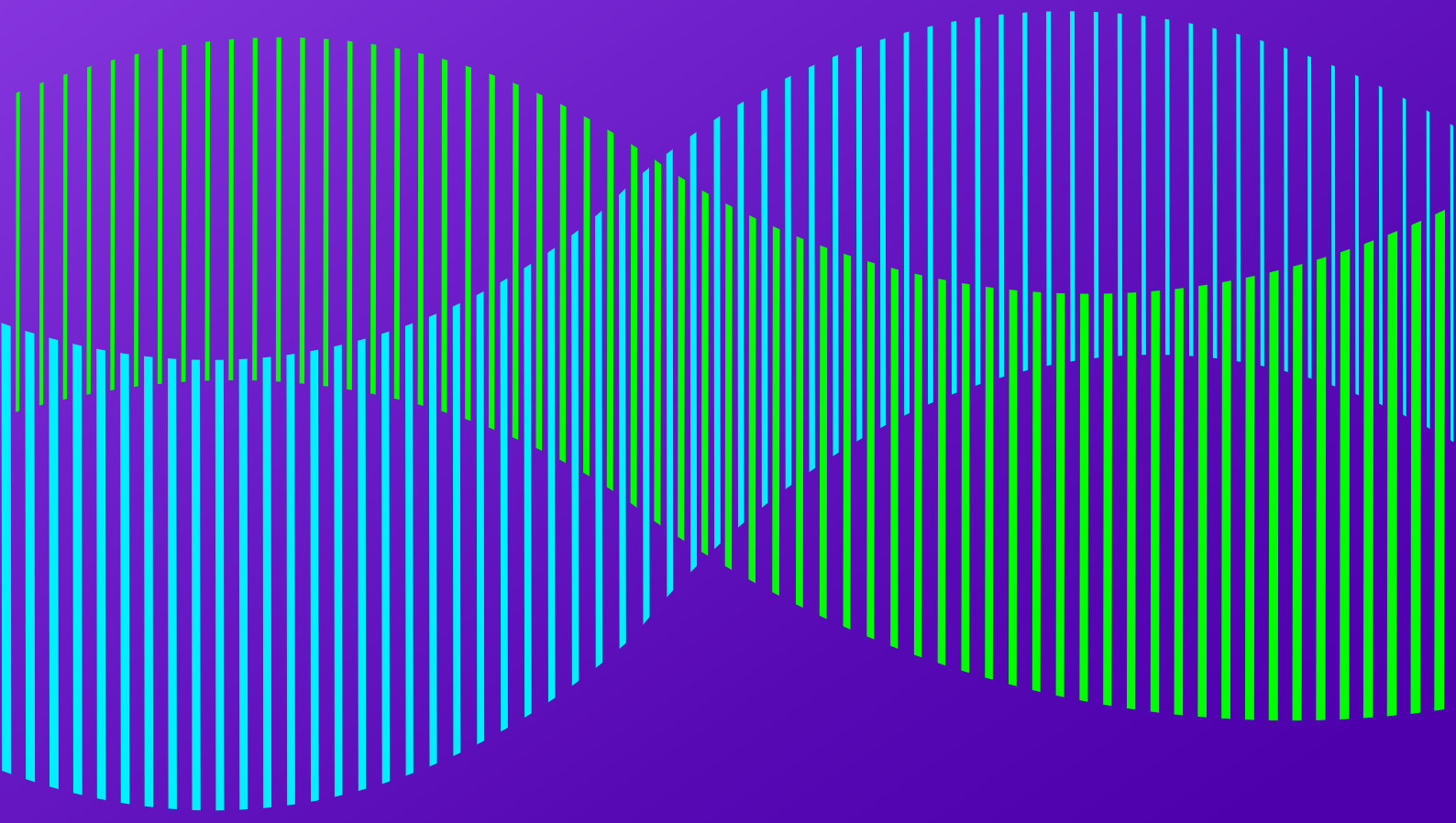


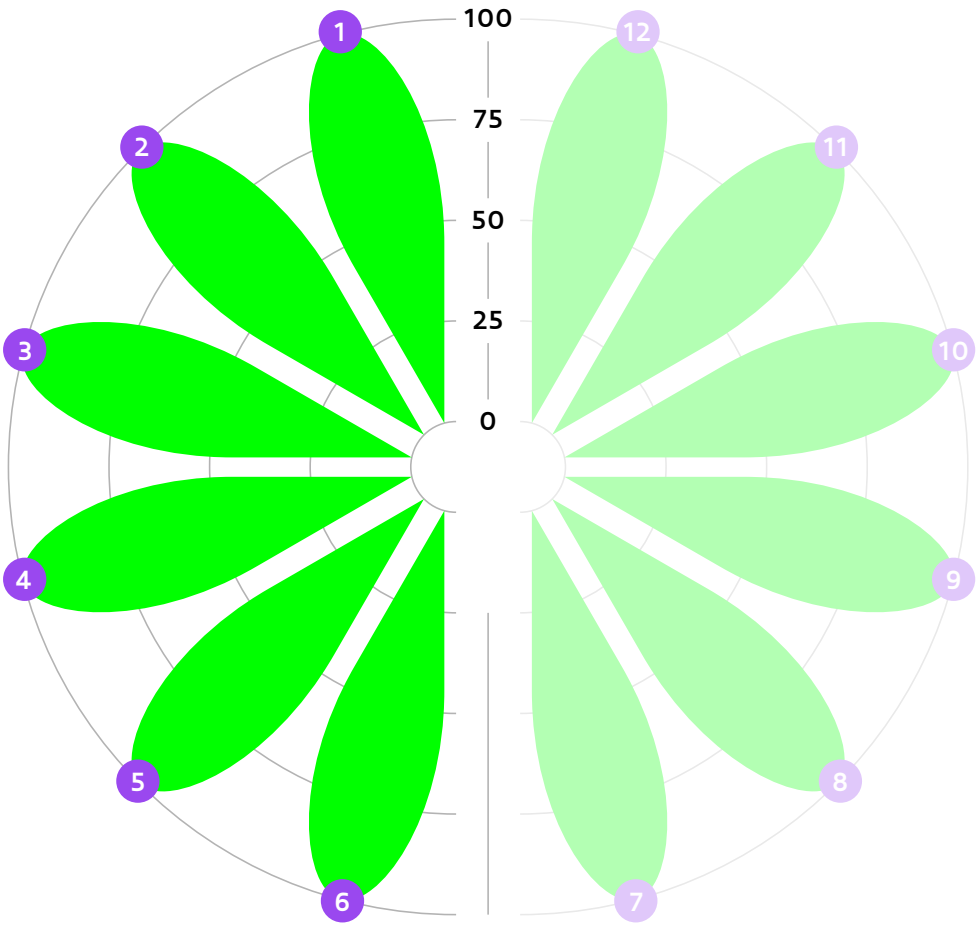
TABLE 1
Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

Overall performance in the DWI

Rank	Country	Score (0-100)
1	Canada	69.8
2	Australia	69.0
3	Singapore	68.1
4	Estonia	67.1
5	France	66.8
6	United Kingdom	66.3
7	Germany	65.2
8	United States	61.0
=9	China	60.5
=9	Italy	60.5
11	Argentina	60.2
12	Sweden	60.2
=13	Chile	59.6
=13	Korea, Republic of	59.6
15	Colombia	58.1
16	United Arab Emirates	57.9
17	Malaysia	57.8
=18	India	57.5
=18	Japan	57.5
20	Mexico	57.4
21	Bulgaria	57.2
22	Brazil	55.1
=23	Indonesia	54.5
=23	Kenya	54.5
25	Türkiye	54.4
26	Viet Nam	54.1
27	Saudi Arabia	53.8
28	South Africa	53.0
29	Ghana	50.6
30	Kuwait	50.0
31	Nigeria	48.4
32	Egypt	46.6
33	Pakistan	45.1
34	Bangladesh	44.1
35	Algeria	39.8

Balancing Needs

The "Balancing Needs" sub-index includes six pillars examining the risks posed by digital technology and to what extent these risks are being addressed. This component of the DWI captures the most direct action being taken around the world to support digital wellbeing.



1 Social Cohesion
2 Mental Health
3 Physical Health
4 Ability to Disconnect
5 Information Quality
6 Cybersafety
7 Connectivity
8 Social Connectedness
9 Education and Skills
10 Work, Productivity, and Income
11 Entertainment and Culture
12 Access to Services and Goods

For the Balancing Needs component, data collected for the DWI reveals:

Policies to support digital mental health can help vulnerable individuals — an area with the potential to be improved across the board.

Singapore leads in the mental health pillar, followed by the United Kingdom and the Republic of Korea. Generally, advanced economies have better scores, but China and Algeria stand out among middle-income nations. Only eight countries have complete frameworks for digital mental health — that is, the use of digital technology to directly support mental health care and service provision — with Singapore, the United Kingdom, and Canada showcasing successful integration into education. Bangladesh, India, and the United Arab Emirates report greater levels of distress associated with extended digital technology use, while the United States, Australia and Canada report the most significant psychological impacts such as feelings of loneliness and anxiety linked with remote working or studying. Less affluent countries report lower levels of such distress, potentially due to less common remote activities, which can be linked to connectivity gaps and lower flexibility of work arrangements.

Maintaining physical health is a challenge given growing exposure to digital technologies, stressing the need for more dedicated policies.

Canada, France, and Australia lead in the physical health pillar; overall, richer countries attain higher scores in this area. Eight countries have clear government recommendations on the healthy use of digital technologies. Only Canada, India, Estonia, and Ghana fully address physical health risks in school curricula. Viet Nam, Malaysia, Ghana, and Nigeria reported more physical health complaints associated with digital technologies including dry eyes, headaches, and back pain. Algeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh reported greater disruption to offline activities such as in-person engagement with family and friends, and missing work and school related activities.

"Right to disconnect"[01] policies show decisive action to promote digital wellbeing and represent one area with the potential to be developed around the world.

Affluent countries are generally stronger in this area, with Australia, Italy, and Germany leading in the ability to disconnect pillar. Argentina, Mexico, and Colombia, middle-income countries, demonstrate a strong performance too. Nine countries in the DWI — Australia, Argentina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, Italy, and Mexico — have established legislation on the right to disconnect. When it comes to remote work or study, challenges in maintaining healthy boundaries show no significant differences across income segments, but advanced economies show overall higher adoption rates of measures to promote digital wellbeing at work.

Misinformation and disinformation pose risks to wellbeing that require government action around the world.

Estonia leads in the information quality pillar, followed by Argentina, and Canada. Fourteen countries demonstrate clear governmental action against misinformation. Seventeen countries, across all income levels integrate disinformation awareness into education. Trust in online information is highest in Nigeria, followed by Bangladesh, Germany, and Estonia with generally similar levels across income segments. Viet Nam, Indonesia, and Malaysia are the most active in verifying information accuracy.

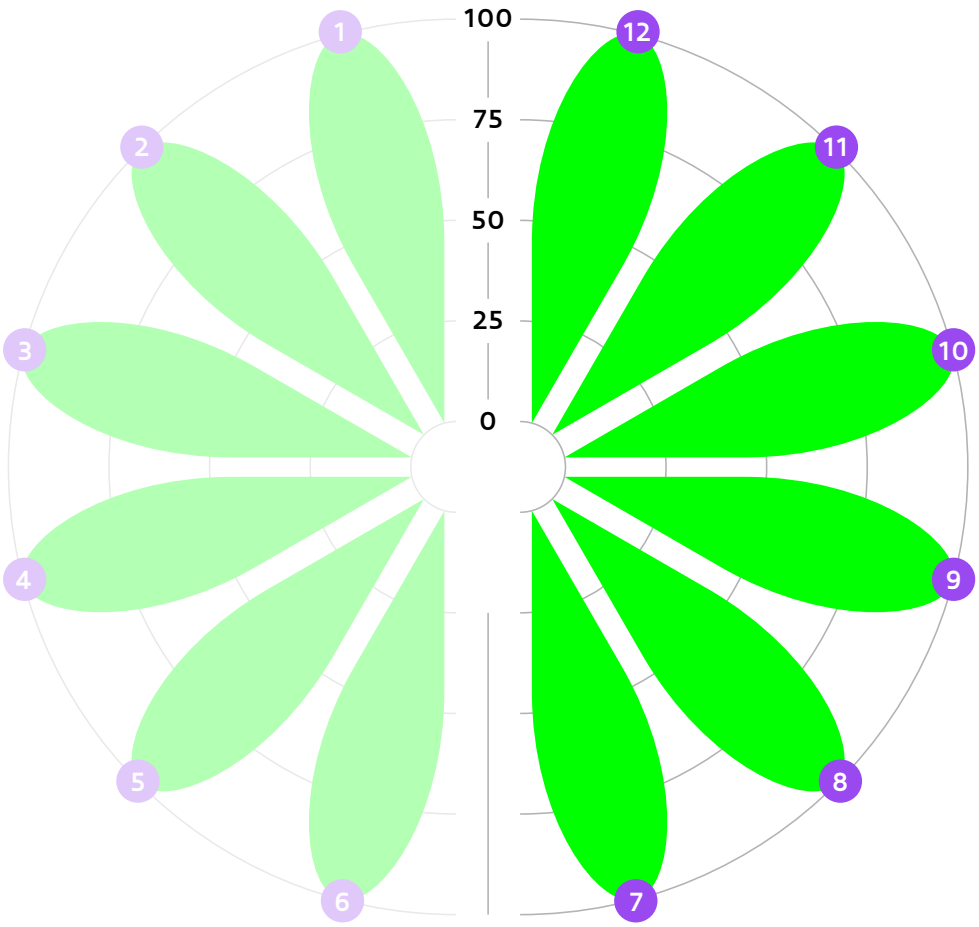
Challenges in data safety are more evident in middle-income countries, while cyberbullying needs more policy action around the world.

The top performers in the cybersafety pillar are the United States, France, and Singapore. The United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom lead in cybersecurity commitment. More secure internet servers are found in wealthier nations. Australia, China, and Canada lead in user strategies to protect personal data. The United States leads in cyberbullying and cybersafety policies, followed by Canada and France. Across most countries, policies focused on parents are well established. These include resources and digital safety toolkits for parents to deal with cyberbullying. However, policies focused on children and youth, such as e-safety guidelines and provisions for cyber wellness in education curriculum, are less common.

01 Refers to the "Right to disconnect" is defined as the right not to engage in work-related electronic communications during non-work hours.

Capturing Opportunities

The "Capturing Opportunities" sub-index/component examines six pillars comprising enablers of digital adoption and opportunity across a range of contexts. This component captures the pre-requisites for adopting digital technologies and the extent to which opportunities are maximized.



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For the Capturing Opportunities component, data collected for the DWI reveals:

Digital interaction does not always lead to meeting people offline, and some of the least affluent countries are the most dynamic in online activism.

The strongest social connectedness is evidenced in the United Arab Emirates, Chile, Bulgaria, Colombia, and Malaysia. Social media engagement averages 68% across all countries, with advanced economies leading. Meeting new people using digital devices is less common in high-income nations (35%) compared with upper-middle-income (55%) and lower-middle-income countries (59%). China and India lead in online engagement, while Nigeria and Kenya are leaders in online activism. Generally, emerging economies score higher in active online engagement and activism.

Middle-income countries embrace online education and training, but still have a journey ahead in integrating digital skills (e.g. using digital safety tools, ability to verify misinformation) in curricula.

Estonia leads the education and skills pillar, followed by Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Kenya. While this reflects a mix of income levels, richer countries generally score higher. Internet access in schools is led by advanced economies, and less affluent nations face challenges in integrating digital skills. Most countries recognize micro-credentials, indicating a widespread trend among both employees and employers to be more open to new types of qualifications. Middle-income countries show strong engagement with digital tools in education, and digital device use for accessing information is also high across this group.

Advanced economies lead in work flexibility, while digital technologies and regulation allow middle-income countries to participate more fully in the knowledge economy.

Estonia, Singapore, Australia, and the United Arab Emirates lead in the work, productivity, and income pillar, with upper-middle-income countries outperforming high-income ones on average. Less affluent countries — including India, Viet Nam, and Bangladesh — have ample room for growth. Remote work frameworks are more advanced in richer nations, while digital nomad visas[02] are prominent in middle-income countries such as Argentina, Colombia, and Brazil. Estonia and Singapore have some of the strongest tech sectors. Ghana and Kenya, meanwhile, have growing tech sectors, demonstrating how the digital economy can empower emerging economies.

Digital technologies are democratizing access to art and entertainment.

Argentina leads in the entertainment and culture pillar, followed by Estonia, the Republic of Korea, India, and Sweden. The DWI notes widespread government support for digital tourism and culture, particularly in wealthier countries. Estonia stands out in experiencing art digitally, while China leads in using technology for creating and sharing art. Middle-income countries generally report greater use of digital devices for consuming artistic and cultural content online compared to their high-income counterparts.

02 "A digital nomad visa is a type of visa that allows you to work remotely for a country registered outside of the country you have chosen to currently live in. Typically, to work in another country, you must have a work permit, and be registered as a taxpayer. This requires you to uproot your entire life back home. Digital nomad visas, on the other hand, have the benefit of becoming a temporary resident of another country, while you work (and pay taxes) in your home country. In the majority of cases, digital nomads are not required to pay taxes in their host country." Source Schengen Visa Info https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/digital-nomad-visa/

There is widespread availability of key digital services for the population, but participatory policymaking remains nascent in some countries.

Seventeen out of the 35 countries have a telecom or ICT regulator for managing digital applications such as e-health and e-education. Meanwhile, Estonia leads in access to services and goods, followed by China and Singapore, with advanced economies dominating the top half of the list. China excels in overall digital health engagement, with lower-middle-income countries surpassing their higher-income counterparts. Digital payments have a 71% engagement rate globally. China leads in online shopping (80%), while Sweden and the United Kingdom do well in managing finances online, additionally, Estonia, Sweden, China, and Colombia show strong engagement with transportation technologies (e.g. car sharing or public transport apps).

Universal internet access is a goal around the world, but some disparities highlight the need for further government support.

The United Kingdom, followed by Canada and France, leads in social cohesion, which focuses on universal access policies, digital literacy for all, and digital inclusion). Almost all countries have universal access and service policies, while 16 countries, mostly high-income, feature comprehensive regulatory frameworks for information and communications technology accessibility. Digital literacy initiatives outside formal education show progress across countries, with notable examples in middle-income countries. The International Telecommunication Union gender parity score indicates that more women than men use the internet in some affluent countries, while Germany, the United Kingdom, and Estonia lead in socio-economic inclusion.

Some countries still require infrastructure investment to reach universal connectivity.

The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait excel in connectivity, with Malaysia and Bulgaria challenging the notion that only the wealthiest economies provide comprehensive connectivity. Despite widespread 4G coverage, some emerging economies face challenges in network infrastructure. Internet penetration rates vary significantly, with high-income countries at 93%, upper-middle-income countries at 79%, and lower-middle-income countries at 53%. Affordability issues reflect economic disparities, with people in richer nations spending less than 0.1% of their income on connectivity, compared with 2.3% and 5.4% in upper-middle and lower-middle-income countries.

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sync

Sync is a digital wellbeing initiative by King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) with a vision to create a world where we are all in control of our digital lives.

The program is guided by extensive research - in collaboration with global entities - to understand the implications of technology and how it's affecting our lives, and translate the knowledge we gain into awareness campaigns, tools, experiences, educational content and programs aiming to raise global awareness around the topic.

sync.ithra.com