

# Country Report Germany

**Country insights report 2024** 







Overall score 65.2 (out of 100)

Placed 7th (out of 35)

The Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI) well expresses the strength of Germany in its policies and efforts concerning digital wellbeing. Germany is placed 7th out of the 35 countries analyzed for the index, scoring 65.2. The country performs strongly in both areas of the index, showing particular attention to the "Balancing needs" pillars.

In its regional group, Germany is placed 4th, sitting above average. In the global DWI, Germany also scores well above the average of 57.2, putting it in a great position to keep growing its' citizens' digital wellbeing and leading other countries on a similar path. The country exhibits good performance in the Capturing opportunities sub-index with an aggregate score of 60.9 (16th), and excels in the Balancing needs sub-index, with a score of 69.5 (5th).



### Comparative performance in the DWI

### FIGURE 1

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

### The context of digital wellbeing in the country

Germany's digital wellbeing landscape stands at a relevant juncture, with several key efforts being pushed forward at institutional level to address digital wellbeing. The focus of these activities spans across health, digital literacy, equitable access to the internet, with other distinct initiatives driven by various other stakeholders towards a society where digital wellbeing is a key feature. In this broad perspective, the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMDV) has unveiled a comprehensive digital strategy in 2023, aligning with key digital wellbeing objectives. This strategy aims to bolster citizens' wellbeing and the nation's digital readiness, emphasizing aspects such as media, education, and novel work methodologies. Setting various measurable goals, this strategy underlines the intent to create a digitally advanced society while prioritizing the needs of its citizens.

In crucial matters such as education and training, programs such as the Digital Education Initiative by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) convey the aforementioned efforts. Launched in 2021, the Initiative aims to ensure access to digital tools, equipment, and training in educational settings. Projects like the "School Transformation" learning platform and collaborations under the Digital Pact for Schools foster digital literacy and innovation within the education system. In the same vein, non-profit organizations like Bertelsmann Stiftung contribute to the digital landscape with projects emphasizing inclusion and skills development.

E-government and data protection remain high on the German digital wellbeing agenda. A key actor on several fronts here is the Digital Service Office, a ngo-turned Government in-house body that focuses on software and digitalization projects but also engages youth through highly qualified fellowships in the public sector, contributing to both technological advancements and skill development. Moreover, there are highly vocal groups such as Digitalcourage, championing privacy rights, advocating for free and open internet and responsible digital practices, and formation of think tanks like the Stiftung Neue Verantwortung (SNV). Such organizations play a significant role in shaping policy discourse in various digital areas, pushing for stronger attention on multiple dimensions that influence digital wellbeing, from cybersecurity to digital talent development. At a different level, the country's e-government initiatives, including the ability to directly petition laws with the Federal Parliament and the development of a complete digital identity for citizens and organizations, represent the strides toward efficient and citizen-centric digital governance.

Moreover, a central pillar of Germany's activities towards better digital wellbeing is its deep reform towards digital health, initiated by the Digital Healthcare Act of 2019 by the Federal Ministry of Health (BMG). The implementation of the law aims for a comprehensive shift to fully digitalized and broadly accessible health services, and is being supported by the recent Digital Health and Nursing Strategy. laying out the path for significant advancements by 2026. Other initiatives, such as Hannover's Digital Health City program, showcase the strength and traction gained by digital health at a local level.

Finally, a crucial role is played by Bitkom, Germany's leading digital industry association, which engages in advocacy and projects touching upon multiple aspects of digital wellbeing, from education, new issues in the digital workplace, data management, and privacy, with significant participation of industry members.

When put in perspective, all these initiatives coming from diverse stakeholders exemplify Germany's commitment as a whole to developing a digitally inclusive, rights-focused, and forward-thinking society.

### Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure

In Germany, the responsibility for overseeing digital wellbeing and steering the country's digital strategy falls under various actors, each contributing to different aspects of digital policies and initiatives rather than a single entity focused on digital wellbeing.

In this context, the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMDV) plays a key role in formulating strategies and coordinating efforts to advance the country's digital landscape. While not exclusively dedicated to digital wellbeing, the BMDV is responsible for relevant policies and programmes. For instance, in 2023, the BMDV introduced a comprehensive digital strategy regarding key aspects that are crucial for citizens' digital wellbeing, including media, education, and work. This strategy aims to ensure a digitally advanced society while emphasizing data sovereignty and the nation's overall digital readiness.

While a specific entity focused on digital wellbeing might not exist, Germany's approach involves multiple ministries, such as the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the Federal Ministry of Health, each leading initiatives that contribute to citizens' digital wellness in various domains.

Source: https://bmdv.bund.de/EN/

### The country's strengths and areas for improvement

Germany reflects notable strengths in various domains of the index, positioning itself favourably among global rankings. The country excels particularly in ensuring the ability to disconnect, with a score of 79.0 (3rd). Additionally, Germany's care in addressing digital-related mental health challenges shows in its score of 62.8 (5th). Moreover, the country scores 69.7 (6th), in the cybersafety pillar and 89.5 (7th) in social cohesion, highlighting a commitment to a secure digital environment and strong community bonds even in the digital sphere.

When it comes to opportunities for growth, few areas emerge. The social connectedness pillar presents a score of 60.9 (17th), suggesting room for enhancing digital platforms in this direction. Furthermore, in the education and skills pillar, Germany scores 62.8 (21st), highlighting the relevance of efforts in advancing digital literacy and skill-building initiatives.

#### FIGURE 2

Germany

DWI Average

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

### Performance of Germany 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	81.8	15	Capillary nationwide internet accessibility and good internet affordability account for a good performance in the pillar, along with a relevant progress in the development of a high-speed internet network.	
Social connectedness	60.9	17	Social networks are used consistently by 85.1% of survey respondents and 89.4% use them to stay connected with friends, family, and colleagues, yet only 21% use them for direct activism and engagement.	
Education and skills	62.8	21	There is room for improvement regarding digital resources within the education sector, encompassing both formal education and access to information and online learning.	
Work, productivity and income	40.8	14	Germany displays active digital workforce and has supportive policies in place for work and productivity. However, there is room for improvement regarding technology-enabled entrepreneurial and work activities.	
Entertainment and culture	59.4	11	Results are positive for when it comes to digital entertainment and art, with broad usage of digital devices for entertainment research and consumption, including travel and leisure.	
Access to services and goods	59.7	10	The country showcases strong metrics in the access to e-government services, finance, commerce, and mobility. Opportunities emerged in the health field, with several initiatives in place to address them.	
Social cohesion	89.5	7	Germany displays robust universal access to internet with provisions for digital inclusion. However, there is room for growth in establishing digital learning initiatives.	
Mental health	62.8	5	The topic is high on the agenda both at institutional and individual level, with Germany displaying positive metrics for surveyed citizens and policies in place.	
Physical health	48.1	15	The country showcases high scores at policy level but there is room for improvement when it comes to citizens maintaining their physical health in relation to technology.	
Ability to disconnect	79.0	3	The right to disconnect is recognized by law and individuals appear aware of the importance of online-offline balance and digital wellness.	
Information quality	68.0	8	Germany demonstrates robust institutional backing for information quality, coupled with favorable outcomes in terms of individuals' awareness of misinformation and their capacity to independently fact- check information.	
Cybersafety	69.7	6	In Germany both institutional players and individuals help foster cybersafety by ensuring robust data protection measures. The country's strong commitment is particularly evident in addressing issues related to cyberbullying, reflecting a comprehensive approach to promoting a safe and secure digital environment.	

## Suggestions that may contribute to improvements across the digital ecosystem:

### E-health collaboration

Germany should pursue the opportunity reinforce its e-health efforts by fostering deeper federal-state collaboration and engaging stakeholders. This could be done by establishing a national e-health coordination council to better synchronize strategies and expedite digital healthcare adoption. The recent strategy adopted by the Ministry aligns in the right direction and could serve as a catalyst for broader initiatives on the subject.

#### Accessible future education

Education accessibility and quality are global and crosscutting challenges which will be pivotal in ensuring the sustainability of the German education system and its value for the citizens of the future. Germany could grasp the opportunity to expand the Digital Pact for Schools to cover and reinforce underserved areas more comprehensively. The first step in this sense could be a revamped strategy for "Education in the Digital World" bringing together all Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the country.

#### Promoting cohesive social media

A more positive engagement in social media for community building could be incentivized at both local and national level. Initiatives to highlight community endeavours and events could foster a sense of belonging while the training of digital activators in schools and communities could promote more responsible and positive online behavior, enhancing social cohesion in digital spaces.

### **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	<b>#</b>	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	۲	Korea, Republic of	59.6
15		Colombia	58.1
16		United Arab Emirates	57.9
17	C	Malaysia	57.8
=18	0	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	C+	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	C	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.



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"<sup>101</sup> 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, middleincome 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.

<sup>01</sup> 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.



component, data collected for the DWI reveals:

#### For the Capturing Opportunities Digital interaction does not always lead to meeting people offline, and some of the least affluent countries are the most dunamic 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-middleincome (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. Middleincome 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<sup>92</sup> are prominent in middleincome 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.

<sup>02</sup> "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.







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

