

# Country Report

# Italy

Country insights report 2024



# Italy

Overall score  
**60.5 (out of 100)**

Placed  
**9th (out of 35)**

The Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI) for Italy highlights several strengths and some space for improvement in the country's digital wellbeing approach. Attaining a score of 60.5, Italy is placed ninth out of the 35 countries. The performance in the "Balancing needs" pillars is strong, while the "Capturing opportunities" pillars are in line with the index average.

Scoring 60.5, Italy is below the regional average of the Europe and Central Asia countries (62.2) and when compared to the global sample, Italy sits above the average score (57.2). The country shows a strong performance in the "Balancing needs" sub-index with a score of 63.5 (8th) yet showing space for growth and improvement, which is especially present in the "Capturing opportunities" sub-index where it scores 57.4 (23th).

## Comparative performance in the DWI

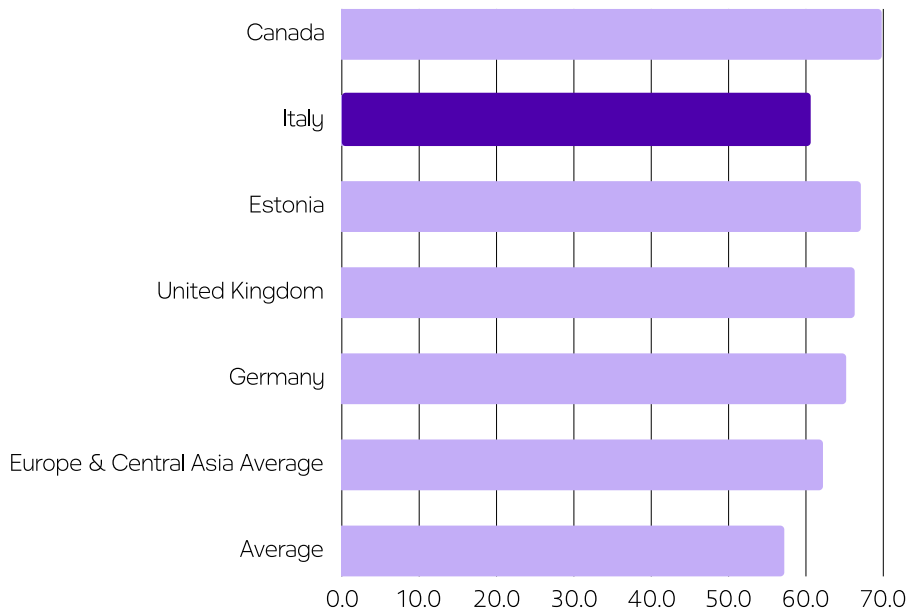


FIGURE 1

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

## The context of digital wellbeing in the country

Italy's digital wellbeing landscape is undergoing significant evolution, shaped by various intersecting factors. In the first place, a strong emphasis on the topic has been forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, fostering crosscutting initiatives, and has subsequently remained a key topic in the agenda of the current Government, which took office in 2022. In addressing digital wellbeing as a whole, stakeholders are taking multifaceted approaches. At an institutional level, the Health Ministry and the Department for Digital Transformation are advancing e-health solutions, aiming to enhance healthcare accessibility and efficiency. At the same time, direct implications of technology for citizens are signaled as high on the Government's agenda, with Prime Minister Meloni planning to shape the upcoming G7 summit of 2024, hosted by Italy, around the topic of artificial intelligence.

In parallel, initiatives like the innovative "Unica" platform by the Ministry of Education cater to students, offering a comprehensive space for academic guidance, skill assessment and career preparation, reflecting the commitment to nurturing holistic development in the digital era. The National Strategy for Digital Competences underscores inclusivity, aiming to elevate digital literacy across all age groups while unlocking opportunities in emerging technologies and jobs. Multiple other actors engage in this activity, with several private actors offering the opportunity of accessing remote high school education, and historical universities setting up fully online branches.

Concurrently, the country grapples with mental health issues among its youth, prompting concerted efforts from various actors to address this pressing concern. There is action also for what regards the issue of cyberbullying, with the Government and other institutional actors taking action with policies, information campaigns, and training tools for teachers.

Moreover, in order for digital wellbeing to be meaningful for every citizen, further attention is being put on developing the digital economy, its maturity and capacity to positively interact with stakeholders. In this sense, Italy's efforts toward crosscutting connectivity are exemplified by complete 4G coverage and plans for widespread fiber optic connectivity through the Ultrawide Band initiative. The country is also witnessing a continuous growth in startup investments, yet it remains a relatively small player on the European and international stage. The state-owned investment entity, CDP Venture Capital, has bolstered the ecosystem by establishing the Rete Nazionale Acceleratori, a network of thematic startup hubs with the objective of fostering a more robust environment for innovation and investment, although it still faces challenges in scaling up to match other European counterparts.

In a similar fashion, the nation's ambitious National Recovery and Resilience Plan allocates a substantial portion of its EUR200 billion funding to propel digital transformation across multiple sectors. This focus signifies Italy's intent to leverage technology for economic revitalization. However, amidst this digital push, combating fake news remains a significant challenge, with Italy being a hub for a third of Europe's fake news production. This issue underscores the importance of digital literacy initiatives, and a strong answer can be seen in the government's Repubblica Digitale initiative, inviting diverse stakeholders to propose solutions for the population's digital challenges and training, touching upon multiple dimensions of digital wellbeing.

These collective endeavors signify a concerted effort among stakeholders to navigate Italy toward a digitally empowered future, prioritizing education, connectivity and innovation while addressing societal challenges in the digital realm.

## Department for Digital Transformation

The Department for Digital Transformation is one of the key departments in the Italian Government as it oversees and coordinates all institutional efforts regarding digitalization and its implications, including a strong role of coordination when it comes to digital wellbeing regarding health and education.

The Department is supported by AGID, the Agency for Digital Italy, a specialized government agency, which covers most of the technical topics regarding digitalization of the country, such as common standards and interoperability guidelines. The Department has its roots in the Special Envoy for the Digital Agenda set up in 2016, which developed into a Government Department and the AGID agency.

The Department directly manages programs relevant for the topic, such as the Mobility-as-a-Service trial that is taking place across the major cities in the country and the e-Health initiatives with the Ministry of Health and regional authorities.

The Department also presides over several key initiatives such as Digital Identity and Digital Citizenship App, called IO, and the Strategy for Cloud and Digital Infrastructures. Special attention should be devoted to the citizenship app, that is meant to become a one-stop-shop for all citizens interactions and necessities, ranging from government and bureaucracy to health and social security.

Source: <https://innovazione.gov.it/dipartimento/en/what-we-do/>; <https://www.agid.gov.it/en>

## The country's strengths and areas for improvement

The country excels in the sector of entertainment and culture, with commendable score of 60.6 (9th). Its rich cultural heritage and vibrant entertainment offerings contribute to a digitally enriched lifestyle, with both national museums and private actors leading the way, and an institutional effort to digitalize all museums. Additionally, Italy shines in aspects of social cohesion, earning a remarkable score of 94.5 (fifth). This high score underscores the strong sense of community and social fabric prevalent within the country, evidenced by multiple local actors focusing, among other topics, on digitalization as an opportunity for community and individual wellbeing. Moreover, Italy's citizens are well able to disconnect, which shows in a score of 82.8 (second), underpinning their capacity to balance digital engagement with offline activities, fostering a healthier relationship with technology.

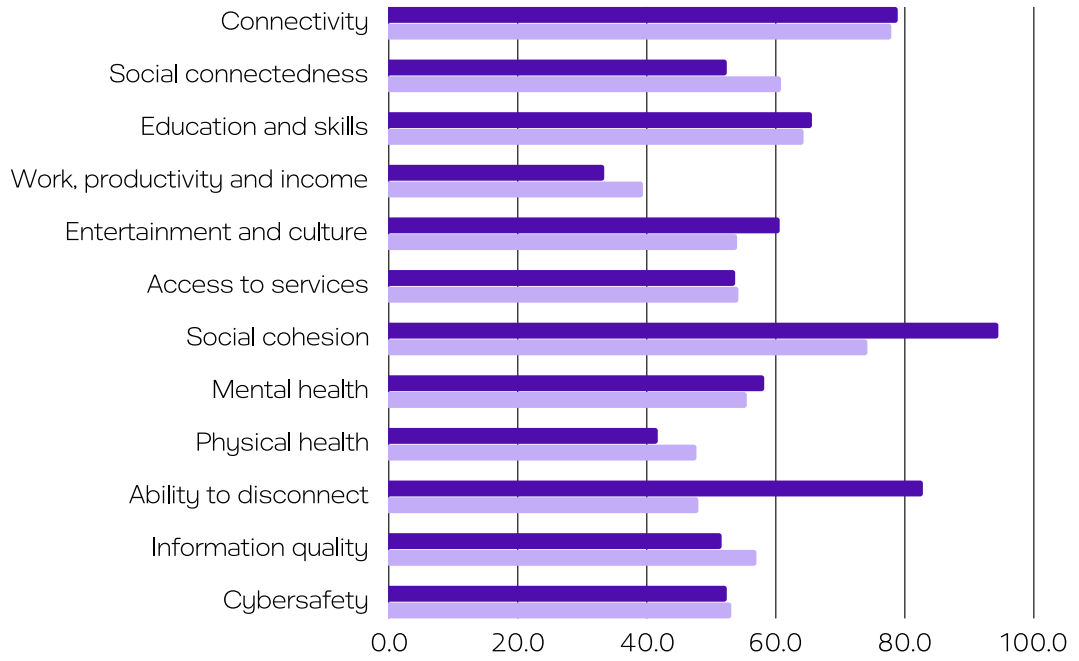
Italy also faces challenges ahead. The matter of social connectedness, with a score of 52.4 (33rd), indicates a need to bolster digital platforms fostering better interpersonal connections. Regarding work, productivity and income, the score of 33.4 (26th) highlights an opportunity to leverage digital tools for economic advancement and productivity enhancement. Italy is on the way for improvement when it comes to information quality in the digital realm, scoring 51.6 (28th). In terms of physical health of its citizens, Italy registers a score of 41.7 (20th), signifying a need to address the intersection of digital and physical for a healthier lifestyle.

**FIGURE 2**

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

**Performance of Italy by index pillars compared to DWI sample**

● Italy  
● DWI Average



# 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	78.9	19	4G is accessible nationwide, with widespread internet usage along with a competitive mobile market offer. Strategic efforts are in place for ultrawide band.
Social connectedness	52.4	33	More than 79% of survey respondents use social media actively, with user engagement and activism through social media sitting respectively at 43.5% and 16.5%.
Education and skills	65.6	18	Access to internet in schools is relatively high and the education system well geared. There are policies in place for upskilling with micro credentials, yet only 20% of respondents used it for online courses or degrees.
Work, productivity and income	33.4	26	Opportunities and legislation for remote workers and digital nomads can be improved. Metrics regarding the usage of technological tools for work and business purposes are positive.
Entertainment and culture	60.6	9	Strong cultural policies in place, also favoring accessibility of art through digital tools. The penetration of digital services in the entertainment, leisure and travel sectors is relatively high.
Access to services and goods	53.7	21	Strong metrics have been evidenced regarding commerce, finance and transportation. Additionally, different stakeholders in the e-government and health fields are bringing relevant improvements forward.
Social cohesion	94.5	5	Widespread internet access and key accessibility policies are in place with the objectives of wide digital literacy and inclusion.
Mental health	58.2	12	Policies and strategies are in place to prevent and treat digital addiction. Knowledge and education of digital mental health offer improvement opportunities.
Physical health	41.7	20	Limited government guidance on the matter. Knowledge and education of physical health risks of digital abuse offer improvement opportunities.
Ability to disconnect	82.8	2	Strong recognition of the right to disconnect included in various policies. High awareness and agency from respondents can be evidenced on the matter.
Information quality	51.6	28	More institutional initiatives could help improve this metric, such as the recent insertion in the education curricula. Trust in online information is below average for survey respondents, similar to the verification of information found online.
Cybersafety	52.4	14	Improvements are underway concerning protection of personal data, both in terms of policy and individual skills and knowledge, going along with the significant efforts in place to combat cyberbullying and educate on the topic.

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

## **Developing digital health access**

As the population ages on one hand and growing scores of citizens become digital-first on the other, ensuring fair and universal access to e-health services is a central area for improvement, showing an opportunity to directly impact the wellbeing of individuals. The efforts underway at the regional level should be coordinated and supported, and the Strategic plan for digital health should be taken as the institutional signpost for this important process.

## **Supporting entrepreneurship and digital workers**

The growing relevance of the digital sector, both in terms of economic value and number jobs can be directed towards the creation of job opportunities and a better living for citizens. Adoption of stronger incentives and policies to attract and retain talent such as visas and the injection of additional funding in the market can be transformative tools. The ecosystem level yet remains an essential aspect and the activities of networks such as the Houses of Emerging Technologies and the National Accelerators should see thorough support in their initiatives, as they act at local level, consequently having the most direct impact on individuals and communities.

## **Improving information quality and digital literacy**

a healthy and transparent information sector is paramount for citizens to be more engaged, active and to enable participation that in turn develops stronger institutions and businesses. This challenge has now mostly moved online, and especially to social media, requiring all stakeholders to shift to new tools for governance and education. Attaining higher information quality and trust in information stems from digital literacy, requiring better policies and an approach that engages all stakeholders, including associations. Initiatives such as a stronger oversight on sources, done by the Italian Digital Media Observatory, and self-assessment and learning tools should be supported and possibly integrated in a structured, national strategy.

## **Strengthening digital connections and enabling action**

the development of new relationships and activism on relevant issues can be strong elements in an improved digital wellbeing for individuals. For this to happen there needs to be a stronger digital yet local and physical connection, followed by more sense of agency on the part of citizens and relevant actors. The abovementioned efforts concerning information quality and digital literacy can be expected to have positive spillover effects on the matter. Additionally, supporting the activation of digital campaigns for local and practical matters can push even more citizens to take action. This is already being done both at the institutional and private level and should be supported in order to become more trusted means, leading to wider adoption.

## 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**

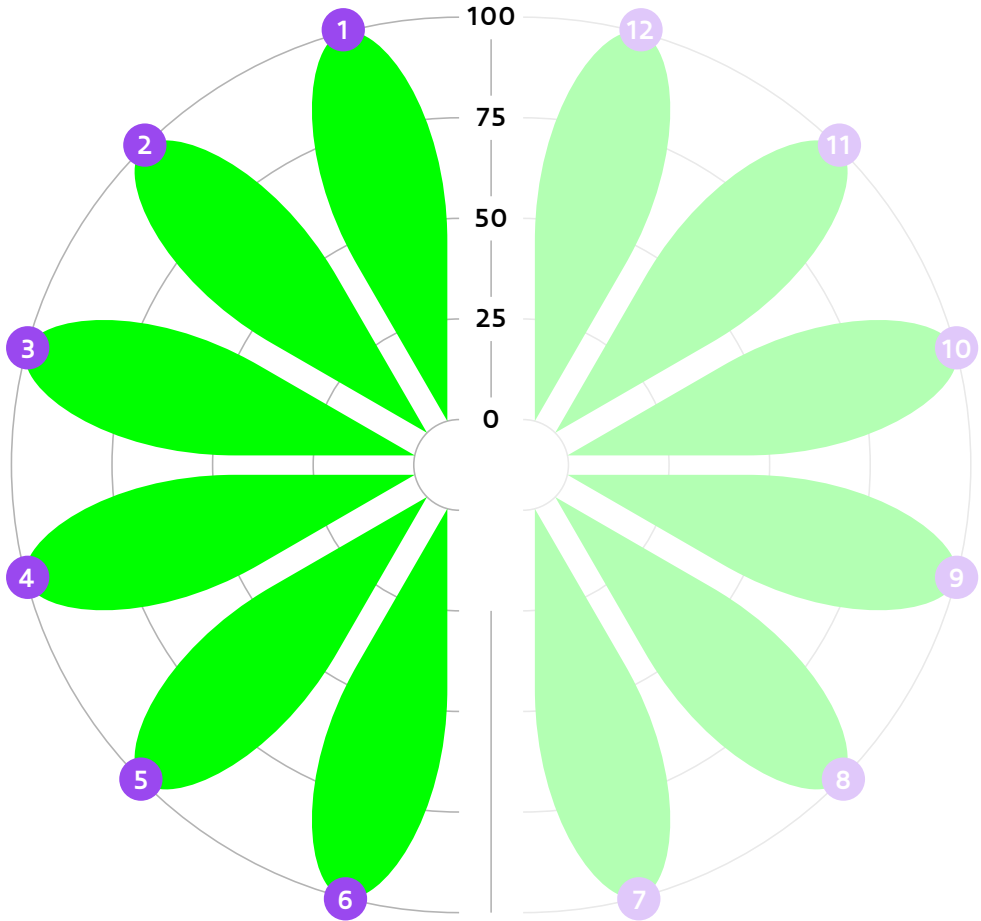
Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

**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”<sup>01</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, 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.

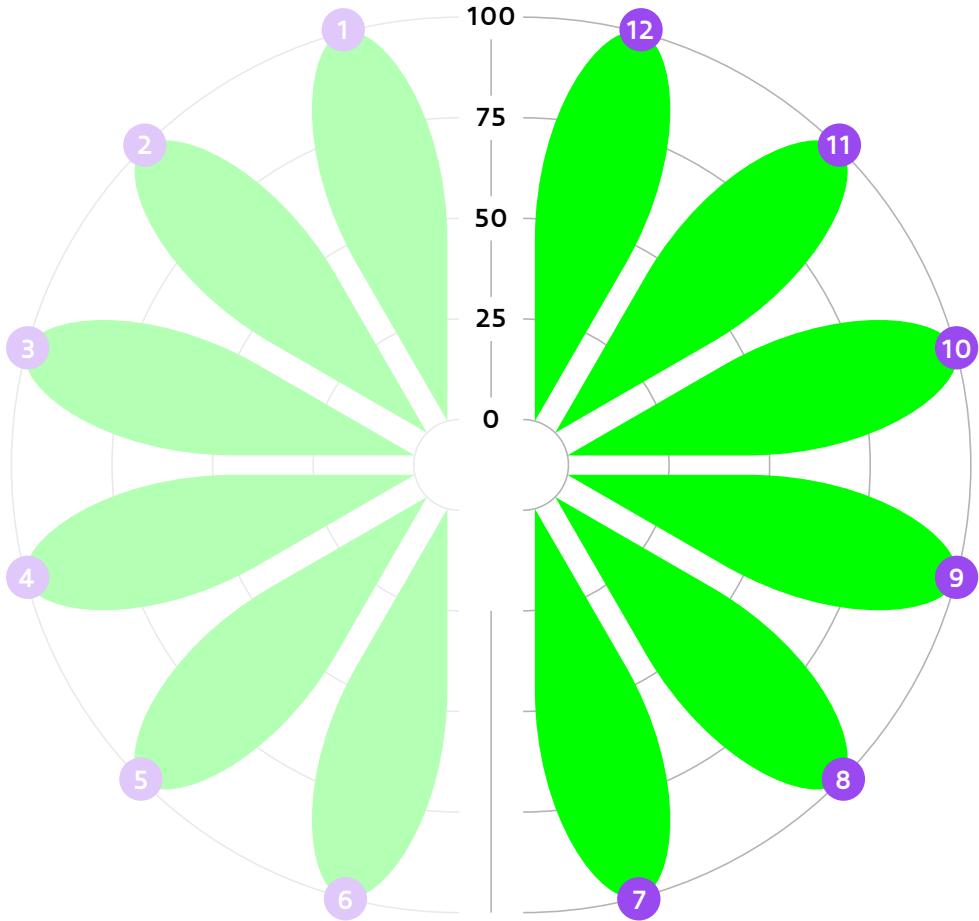
**Challenges in data safety are more evident in middle-income countries, while cyberbullying needs more policy action around the world.**

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.



- 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 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<sup>02</sup> 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.schengenvisa.info/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

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](https://sync.ithra.com)