

Country Report

Kenya

Country insights report 2024



Kenya

Overall score
54.5 (out of 100)

Placed
23rd (out of 35)

The Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI) clearly reveals positive areas in Kenya's digital landscape, while also indicating room for further enhancement and progress. With an overall score of 54.5, Kenya is placed 23rd among the 35 countries examined. The country performs particularly well in the education and skills pillar, while scoring just below average in the "Capturing opportunities" sub-index. Similarly, scores in the "Balancing needs" sub-index suggest areas with room for progress, particularly for measures on social cohesion, physical health, and cybersecurity.

While Kenya boasts the highest score (54.5) in the SSA region, it remains below the average score within the DWI sample and significantly trails the index leader Canada (69.8).

Comparative performance in the DWI

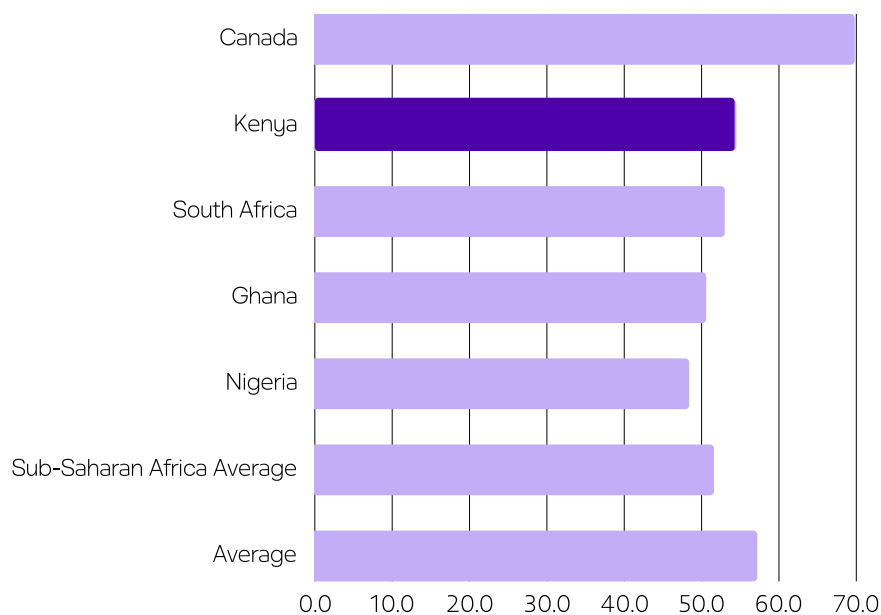


FIGURE 1

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

The context of digital wellbeing in the country

The Kenyan government has undertaken a series of initiatives to enhance digital wellbeing, reflecting a commitment to individual needs and rights. Notably, the Employment (Amendment) Bill of 2022 introduced a "right to disconnect" for employees, encouraging employers to establish policies on contact during off-duty hours, electronic device use, conditions for waiving the right to disconnect, and compensation for after-hours work.

In addition, efforts extend to collective wellbeing initiatives, such as countering misinformation campaigns with innovative collaborations, exemplified by the high-tech consortium involving the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), the Media Council of Kenya, and partnerships with AI start-ups, youth media platforms, and online influencer organizations. The Kenya-wide Mapema Consortium is dedicated to constructing an advanced online early warning system, capable of real-time tracking and counteraction of misinformation in multiple languages, including English, Swahili and Sheng.

Moreover, Kenya engaged actively in a collaborative program with UNESCO, focusing on training teachers to adapt the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Curriculum to address misinformation and disinformation. This initiative aims not just to integrate MIL into the curriculum of participating schools but also to empower teachers, fostering the competencies needed to integrate MIL across various levels, including other aspects of social literacy.

The government's prioritization of the education sector as a means of positive transformation in the digital landscape is exemplified by the Digital Literacy Program (DLP) initiated in 2013. Hosted by the Ministry of ICT, Innovation, and Youth Affairs, the program aims to equip students and teachers in public primary schools with digital technology skills. This, along with interventions such as participation in the MIL curriculum, showcases Kenya's commitment to providing its citizens with the tools to navigate the digital world with awareness and knowledge, and in a healthy manner. Key components of the program include the provision of digital devices to learners and educators, teacher capacity development, broadband connectivity equipment, digital learning content, as well as the local assembly of digital devices and related accessories, paving the way for a digitally adept future generation.

The Kenyan government's recent launch of the electronic Community Health Information System (eCHIS) is a significant stride towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and underscores the pivotal impact of digital tools in enhancing healthcare accessibility. In the health sector, Kenya has also joined the Digital REACH initiative, a comprehensive set of regional programs leveraging information and communication technology (ICT) for the improvement of health outcomes and the benefit of patients across East Africa. Further integration of this programme with initiatives covering mental health, and in particular with issues arising from the use of digital technologies and platforms could be promoted more broadly, for example through the Ministry of Health Virtual Academy.

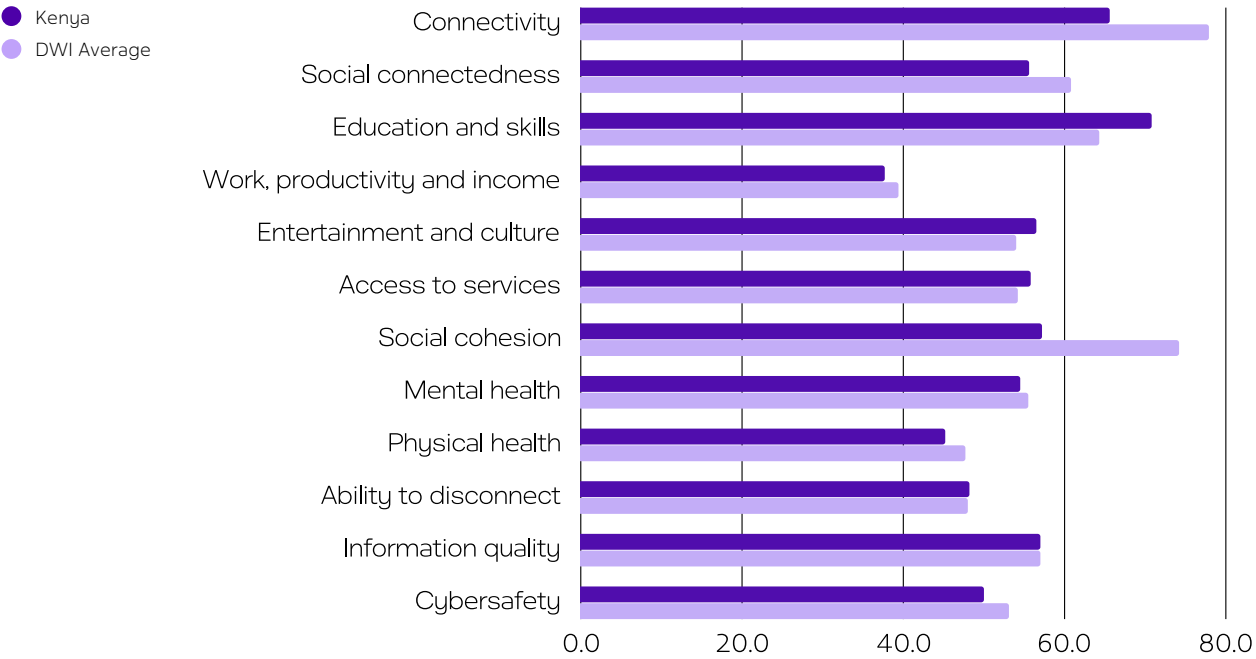
The country's strengths and areas for improvement

Kenya scores particularly well in education and skills, with a score of 70.8 (fifth in the index sample). This reflects the efforts to capitalise on the benefits technology can provide to access education, partially supported by online learning options and a widespread acknowledgement of online micro-credentials. Another comparative strength is entertainment and culture with a score of 56.5 (18th), driven by the government's provision of incentives to promote tourism and culture in the digital space. Additionally, Kenya performs above average in providing access to digital services and goods, with a score of 55.8 (15th). A below average score in social connectedness of 55.6 (28st) is driven by a lack of local social engagement platforms.

The country's digital wellbeing landscape has some areas with potential for improvement. Social cohesion presents the foremost opportunity for growth, with a score of 57.2 (31st), driven primarily by the low percentage of households with internet access at home. Additionally, connectivity scores 65.6 (30th), implying that the restricted internet access within households naturally leads to limited overall internet usage. Building on a robust digital infrastructure and widespread internet access is crucial for facilitating effective communication, widespread information access, and fostering technological innovation: embracing developments in this area holds significant potential for driving impactful progress. While not a severe weakness, the pillar of work, productivity, and income scores relatively low at 37.7 (20th), highlighting the potential for further optimization in leveraging digital tools for business.

FIGURE 2 Performance of Kenya by index pillars compared to DWI sample

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024



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	65.6	30	Despite universal 4G access, internet penetration is severely impacted by costly fixed and mobile broadband baskets.
Social connectedness	55.6	28	Only 19.3% of survey respondents use the most popular social media app actively. 87.9% use digital technologies for staying connected while 49.5% use them for engaging in important issues.
Education and skills	70.8	5	Digital accessibility is particularly relevant for educational resources in the country, and the education system sufficiently addresses the requirements for digital skills. But only 35.9% of respondents have taken an online course or formal degree.
Work, productivity and income	37.7	20	Legislation for remote workers and digital nomads is an area for development. There is a significant tech sector community, but a low number of graduates specializing in ICT programs. Digital devices are commonly used for job hunting, less so for general work assignments.
Entertainment and culture	56.5	18	Several government incentives for promoting digital tourism and culture. Survey respondents use digital technology for entertainment and to engage with offline activities to a lesser extent. Fewer still use it to engage with art and to plan holidays.
Access to services and goods	55.8	15	The oversight of e-applications falls under the purview of the Telecom/ICT regulator. Survey participants primarily utilized digital devices for payment and transportation, with notably fewer engaging in online shopping.
Social cohesion	57.2	31	Crucially, less than a third of households have internet access at home. The country promotes digital literacy outside formal education, and there is moderate gender and income-based parity in internet usage. However, there is no regulatory framework for ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities.
Mental health	54.5	17	The national ICT/digital strategy is deficient in addressing digital wellbeing concerns, leaving an opportunity for the development of initiatives aimed at combating online addiction and providing mental health education in schools. The survey indicates that negative consequences resulting from excessive online engagement are widespread.
Physical health	45.2	16	The government has issued recommendations for healthy digital technology use, but the ICT education curriculum does not cover physical health risks related to digital tech use. Overall, the impact of digital technology on physical health is perceived as moderate by survey respondents.
Ability to disconnect	48.2	17	There is little regulation on the right to disconnect. Maintaining boundaries between work and personal life while studying or working remotely is challenging for many, and only a minority of survey respondents consistently practice digital wellness measures.
Information quality	57	14	While there is limited action on awareness of misinformation through official campaigns, education curricula include learning about recognising disinformation. Additionally, there is moderate trust in online information, and survey respondents sometimes check the validity of information when they have doubts.
Cybersafety	50	20	Moderately high policy commitment to cybersecurity but less so on personal data protection. The country has strong frameworks to educate on and prevent cyberbullying for children and youth. Survey respondents report low prevalence of cyberbullying.

Suggestions that may contribute to improvements across the digital ecosystem:

Affordable Broadband

An effective digital infrastructure and widespread internet accessibility are pivotal for fostering digital communication, innovation and accessibility to online resources, which is further facilitated by the affordability of internet access. The government could look to implement subsidized broadband options to alleviate the financial burden on users, enabling more equitable and widespread internet usage building upon the prevalent 4G network access, to make further progress with The National Broadband Strategy.

Invest in accessibility

While broadening household internet accessibility, it is crucial to strengthen legal frameworks to protect digital rights, ensuring data privacy and preventing discrimination. Robust regulations could encourage digital sector investment and innovation, benefiting society at large. Prioritising affordable and reliable internet access, improving digital literacy, and ensuring equitable distribution of digital transformation benefits are key goals. Special attention to marginalized groups, such as women and people with disabilities, is essential to prevent their exclusion in the digital revolution.

Tech Education

Further foster comprehensive educational initiatives in collaboration with the tech sector to bolster ICT program enrollments and ensure a steady supply of skilled graduates, thereby meeting the demands of the expanding tech sector community.

Digital Health Curriculum

To further enrich the current ICT education curriculum, consider integrating comprehensive modules that emphasize the potential physical health risks linked with prolonged digital technology use. This effort aims to address the public's concerns about the impact of digital technology on physical wellbeing. This could be integrated into already existing programs that can be used to promote digital wellbeing, such as Kenya's Ministry of Health Virtual Academy.

Cybersecurity

As Kenya advances its digital superhighway, cybersecurity becomes crucial, especially in finance, energy and transportation. Privacy breaches are pressing concerns, demanding robust measures. The government should assess and enhance cybersecurity through multistakeholder collaboration, emphasizing system resilience and individual protection. Adding upon the guiding principles of Kenya's Cybersecurity Strategy, responsive communication, complaint acknowledgement and periodic reports on cyber threat trends are essential for fostering trust in digital service providers.

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

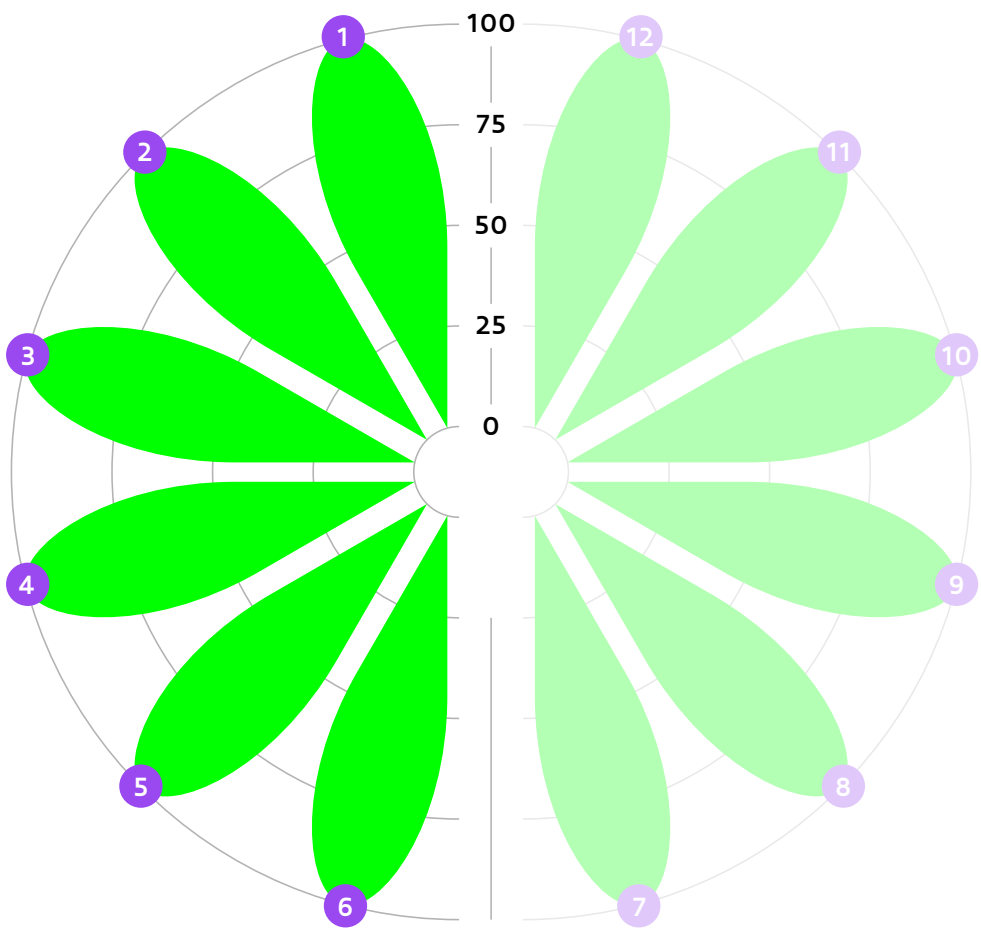
Source: Global Digital
Wellbeing Index 2024

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 | 5 Information Quality | 9 Education and Skills |
| 2 Mental Health | 6 Cybersafety | 10 Work, Productivity, and Income |
| 3 Physical Health | 7 Connectivity | 11 Entertainment and Culture |
| 4 Ability to Disconnect | 8 Social Connectedness | 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.

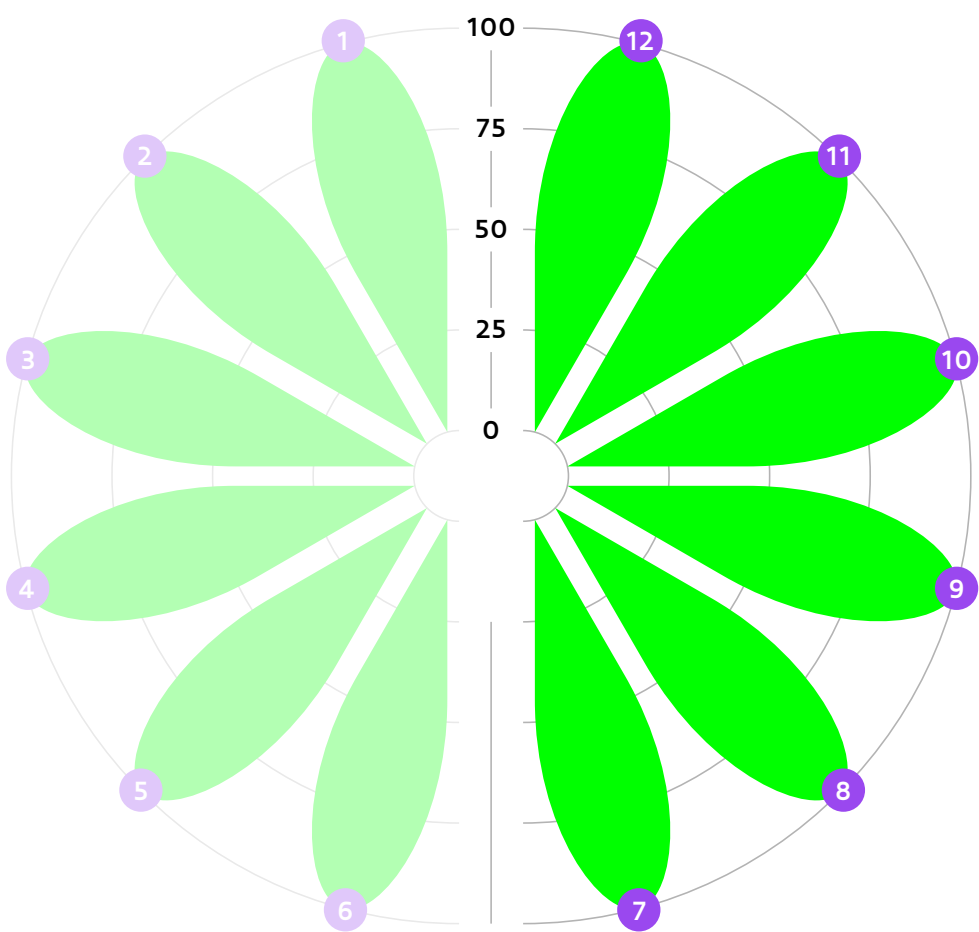
Challenges in data safety are more evident in middle-income countries, while cyberbullying needs more policy action around the world.

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.



- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Social Cohesion | 5 Information Quality | 9 Education and Skills |
| 2 Mental Health | 6 Cybersafety | 10 Work, Productivity, and Income |
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| 4 Ability to Disconnect | 8 Social Connectedness | 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 visas⁰² 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