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Country Report

Singapore

Country insights report 2024

sync

Singapore

Overall score
68.1 (out of 100)

Placed
3rd (out of 35)

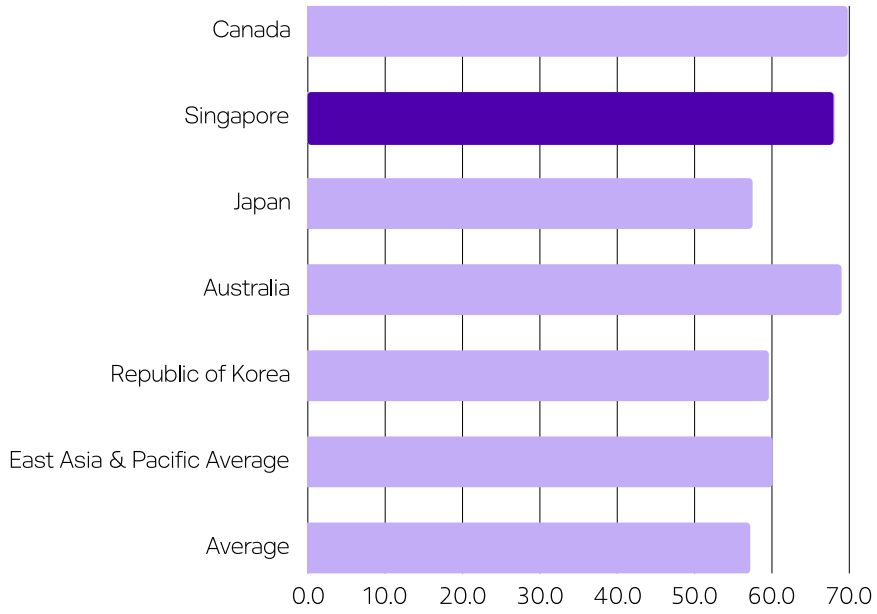
The Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI) showcases a strong digital landscape in Singapore. With an overall score of 68.1, Singapore is placed 3rd among the 35 countries analyzed. Singapore is placed 2nd in the "Capturing opportunities" pillars and 6th in the "Balancing needs" pillars of the index.

Singapore placed 1st among the countries in the East Asia and Pacific region, significantly higher than the regional average of 60.1 and the overall DWI average of 57.2. The country is a close follower of the index leader Canada, which scores 69.8.

Comparative performance in the DWI

FIGURE 1

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024



The context of digital wellbeing in the country

Singapore has a history of being at the forefront of digital transformation and wellbeing. National strategic plans in the past such as "Connected Singapore" (2003-2006) and "Intelligent Nation" (2006-2015) had great success in aligning Singapore with new technological advances.[01] In 2014, Singapore launched the 'Smart Nation' initiative, a comprehensive approach to adopting technology in various aspects of life, including health, transport, urban living, and government services, creating a digital-first access to services through a Digital Government, Digital Economy, and Digital Society. In 2017, $2.4 billion was allocated towards Smart Nation with The Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (SNDGO) and Government Technology Agency (GovTech) coordinating the spending.[02] The Start Nation policy is still ongoing and recently the SNDGO was merged with Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) to form an expanded Smart Nation group that will streamline digital efforts across the country.[03]

Central to this policy was a digital government and in 2017, GovTech Singapore was established, evolving from the Government Chief Information Office with a focus on digitalizing government services, leading application design, development and deployment, cybersecurity, data science & artificial intelligence, government ICT infrastructure, and smart city technology. GovTech fosters talent through scholarships and training programs. Internationally, it engages in knowledge sharing and collaboration through initiatives like the Digital Government Exchange and partnerships with global organizations. This evolution reflects GovTech's adaptability and commitment to driving digital transformation in government services.[04]

Singapore is also committed to supporting businesses using digital means. The Singaporean government has focused on creating a pro-business environment to foster the digitalization of businesses across the country. For example, in 2019, the GoBusiness portal was introduced to streamline the licensing process for businesses. With the GoBusiness portal, the former licensing process was simplified significantly, reducing the number of application forms from 14 with over 800 data fields to just one with 90 data fields or fewer. The Singapore government, led by Enterprise Singapore and the Infocomm Media Development Authority, also provides specialized programs for companies with annual turnovers below $100 million to pursue a specific path. One such initiative, the Start Digital program, launched in 2019, has assisted over 37,000 SMEs by offering fundamental digital solutions through partnerships with banks and telecommunications providers.[05]

Digital Health is also an important pillar of Smart Nation. The number of elderly citizens in Singapore is projected to reach 900,000 by 2030. Combined with low birth rates, the burden of caring for seniors will get heavier, and it is deemed important by Singapore to explore how new digital technologies can be used to meet the health needs of its citizens. At the forefront of the digital health strategy is education and equipping Singaporeans with the information to take better control of their health care. Healthhub allows citizens to easily assess their medical records and stay informed on health-related topics, in conjunction with the TeleHealth programme which allows medical consultations to happen from home. The development of the Health 365 app has seen the first ever National Steps Challenge, rewarding citizens for being more active, collecting over 910,000 sign ups.[06]

01 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2018). Smart Nation Report.

02 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Transforming SG Through Tech.

03 Channel News Asia (2023). Singapore's Smart Nation agency to merge with information ministry's digital functions.

04 GovTech Singapore (2022). Singapore Digital Government Journey

05 The Straits Times (2022). Initiative that has helped over 37,000 SMEs digitalise is extended to 2025.

06 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Smart Health Initiatives

Singapore has also displayed a strong outlook to future digital technology trends. They have been praised for taking an anticipatory outlook to GenAI, starting to equip their banks with the tools to navigate the area almost 10 years ago. AI Singapore, launched in 2017, was created to streamline all Singaporean AI efforts. The organisation aims support use-inspired research, grow knowledge, create tools, and develop the talent to power Singapore's AI effort.[07] Moreover, robotics have also been incorporated into the health care of the elderly, to lighten the load of healthcare workers and allow them to focus their efforts on health solutions.[08]

The country's strengths and areas for improvement

With a high overall index score, Singapore has many strengths across the DWI. It is placed 1st out of 35 in the index and in the mental health pillar, which indicates that Singaporeans are aware of the impacts of technology on their mental health. Singapore's strong digital infrastructure is demonstrated by its 2nd position in the connectivity and work, productivity, and income pillars. cybersafety is also an area where Singapore is a top performer, scoring 71.5, well above the DWI average of 53.1.

Improvement can be made in the ability to disconnect pillar, with a score of 29.3, (32nd). This means that the mechanisms and habits that encourage health technology are not as strong as in other countries and the boundaries between technology and everyday life may not be clear. The entertainment and culture pillar also scores relatively low compared to other areas of Singapore's digital wellbeing, securing 13th place out of 35. This indicates that more could be done to improve the creation and sharing of art online.

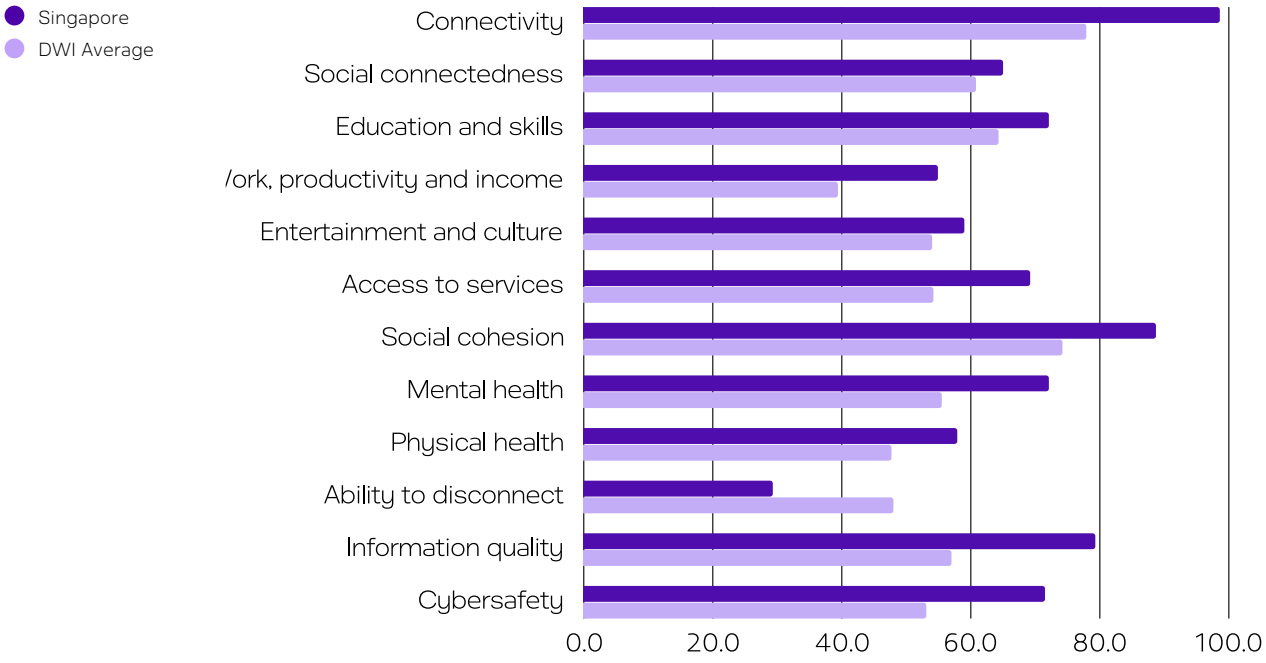
07 AI Singapore (2017). AI Singapore Website

08 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Assistive Technology and Robotics In Healthcare.

FIGURE 2

Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

Performance of Singapore 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	98.6	2	Internet penetration of 96% along with affordable and quick connectivity ensures a high connectivity score.
Social connectedness	65.0	9	While social media platform use and engagement is relatively high, survey respondents suggest that existing and new relationships are not an important part of this.
Education and skills	72.1	4	Educational digital provisions are strong. Although slightly below index average levels of digitally enabled technology provisions indicates that people still use traditional teaching methods to educate themselves alongside digital means.
Work, productivity and income	54.9	2	A large and active digital workforce exists. Although support for remote work is less prevalent and technology only plays in average role in work and generating income.
Entertainment and culture	59.0	13	Art, culture, leisure and entertainment are all digital elements of people's lives in Singapore.
Access to services and goods	69.2	3	Government, finance, and transportation are all digitalised and used widely in Singapore. Although, survey respondents suggest personal devices are used to monitor digital health, online consultations for health were below the index average.
Social cohesion	88.7	9	While inclusive digital policies are evident to support gender, socio-economic, and regional disparities, there is room for improvement in equal access for those with disabilities.
Mental health	72.1	1	Mental health awareness from users of digital devices and policies from the Singaporean government suggest technology is a force for good in mental health.
Physical health	57.9	8	While policies and education about the impact of technology on digital health exist, Singaporean's level of physical activity is still lower than the index average.
Ability to disconnect	29.3	32	There is room for improvement in people taking measures to ensure wellness while working remotely and to protect their work-life balance. Moreover, there is no right to disconnect law.
Information quality	79.3	5	Initiatives in formal education and wider society to protect people from fake news exist. However, survey respondents suggest they still do not trust online sources or critically analyse the information they see to the same extent as in other countries in the index.
Cybersafety	71.5	3	Data safety policies and education exist, and survey respondents indicate that this translates into an active data protection behaviour by Singaporeans. While cyberbullying and cybersafety education are strong, survey respondents indicated that there are above average levels of health issues related to cyberbullying.

Suggestions that may contribute to improvements across the digital ecosystem:

Equal access
Establish policies to guarantee those with disabilities have access to digital initiatives. While strong work is being done as part of the Smart Nation framework to improve access to the internet for all demographics in Singapore, those with disabilities are more at risk of being excluded from technology advancements like AI, and therefore specific policy support should be considered.[01] Moreover, given those with disabilities are on average more likely to need medical help, it should be important they can access the excellent digital health system that has been created.[02]

TeleHealth
Promote the current TeleHealth initiatives to increase adoption. Run a national campaign to educate people on the availability and benefits of accessing healthcare through the video consultations offered as part of the TeleHealth initiative.[03] Given the platform is largely based around supporting those who need immediate care but are unable to visit a hospital, ensure these individuals are aware of the initiative when they attend hospital and GP visitations. For follow-up consultations, it could be considered to make subsequent online consultation the default system, with individuals having the choice to opt for in-person meetings if they prefer.

The right to disconnect
Encourage remote working and digital nomads by improving policy and education on work-life balance. This can be done in a two-fold manner. First, implement explicit right-to-disconnect laws, particularly for employees accessible on mobile devices by their employers. Second, educate workers on maintaining a healthy work-life balance, emphasizing measures to safeguard their well-being while working remotely. Consider promoting this through targeted campaigns, especially when individuals seek medical assistance through the Health 365 app system.[04]

Digital Learning
Support the use of digital devices to access learning and up-skilling initiatives. Within schools, ensure that digital technology has a role in education and learning. For example, incorporate tasks that involve creating presentations and using text editing software to produce pieces of work that may have previously been done by hand. This is important to ensure the digital competency of the next generation in line with the Smart Nation strategy.[05] Within wider society, it could be sensible to offer discounted e-learning programmes or to create digital content that Singaporeans can use to upskill themselves. These could be tied into the training schemes already run by GovTech to educate people on how to operate new technology and improve their digital business offering.[06]

01 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2018). Smart Nation Report.
02 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Smart Health Initiatives.
03 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Smart Health TeleHealth.
04 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2022). Smart Health Initiatives.
05 Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (2018). Smart Nation Report.
06 GovTech Singapore (2022). Singapore Digital Government Journey.

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.

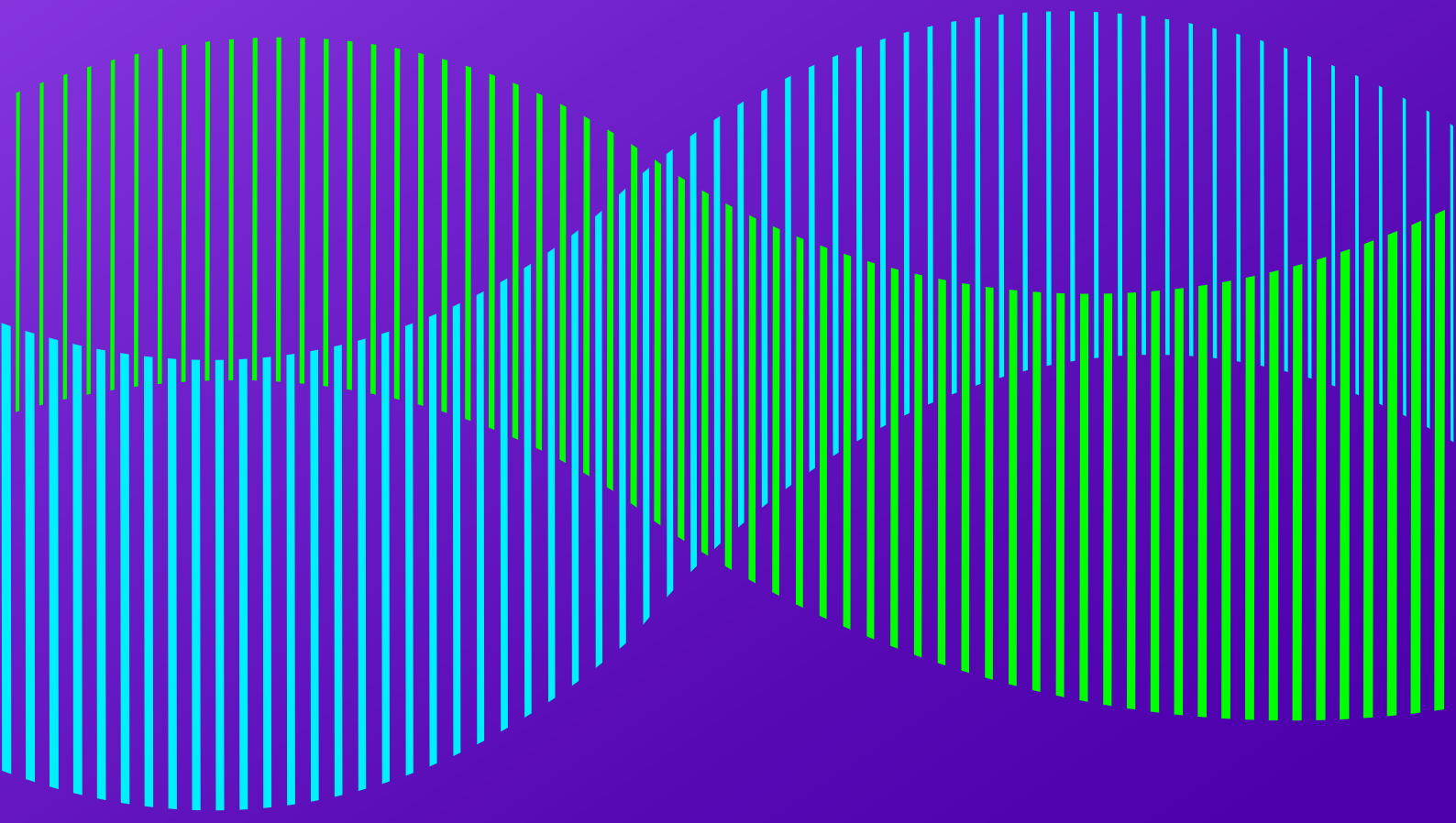


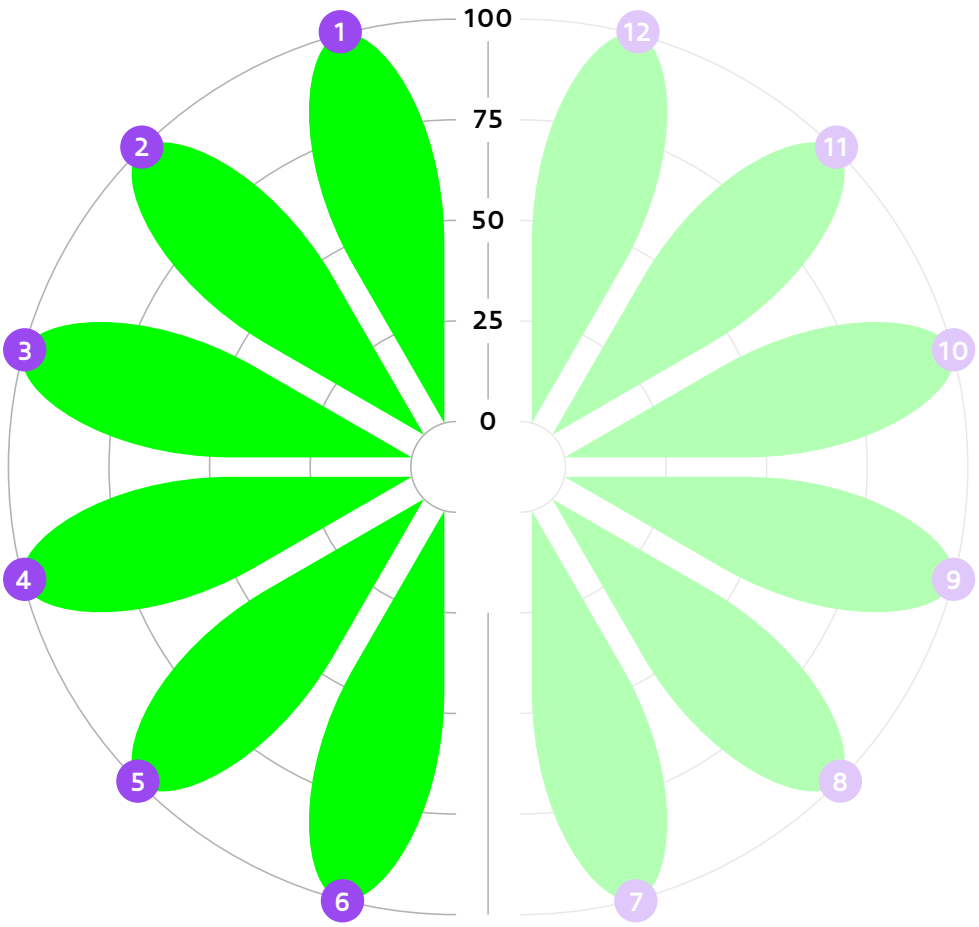
TABLE 1
Source: Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024

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.

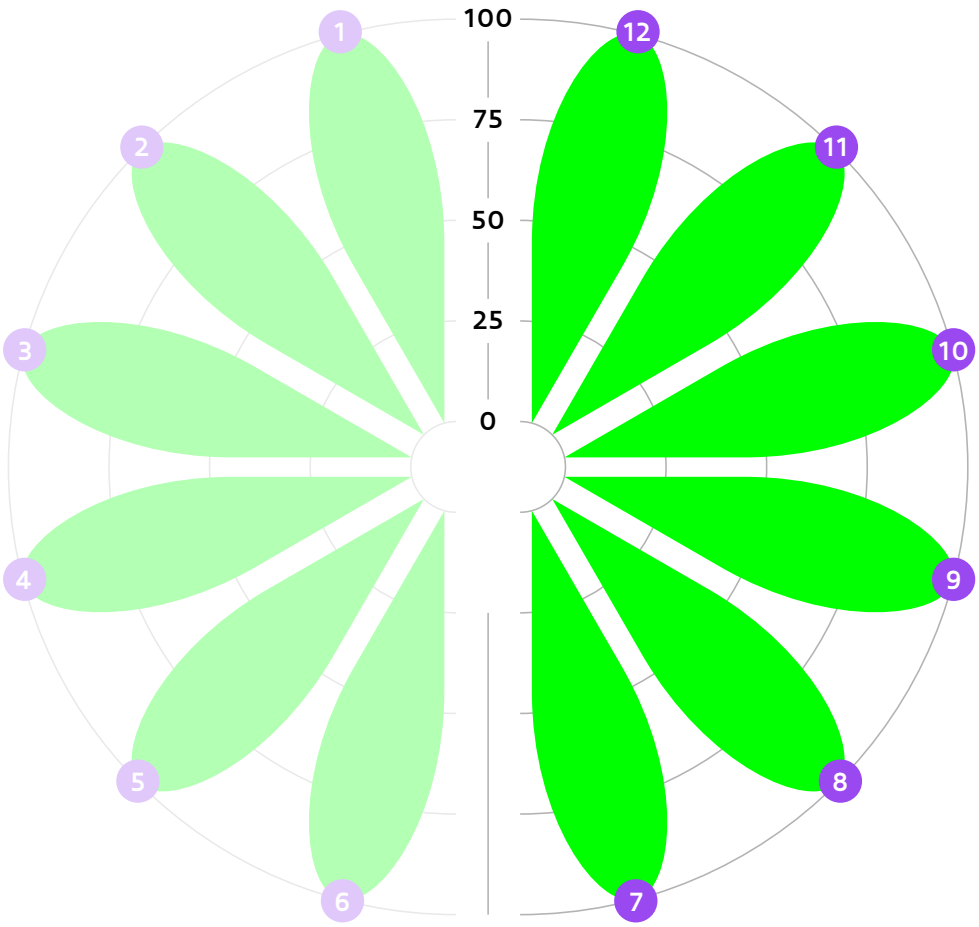
Misinformation and disinformation pose risks to wellbeing that require government action around the world.
Estonia leads in the information quality pillar, followed by Argentina, and Canada. Fourteen countries demonstrate clear governmental action against misinformation. Seventeen countries, across all 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.



1 Social Cohesion
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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[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.

ithra

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