

## **Ithra' s Digital Wellbeing Global Report Reveals Rising Appetite for Digital Control, introduces New Global Digital Wellbeing Index to Help Countries**

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- **Largest of its kind survey covering over 35,000 digitally connected people in 35 nations across five continents in 2023**
- **Compelling insights under six key global themes: Balance, AI, Social Media, Gaming, Work and Regulations**
- **Announces first edition of the Global Digital Wellbeing Index 2024; Canada tops the Index while Saudi Arabia receives high scores in areas of Connectivity and Social Cohesion**

**All countries have significant room for improvement in terms of digital wellbeing calling for new approaches and collaboration among the private sector, governments, and other stakeholders such as educators.**

**Doha, Qatar, February 29, 2024**—The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) today announced the findings of its second Digital Wellbeing Global Report as well as the inaugural launch of its Global Digital Wellbeing Index. The Digital Wellbeing Global Report identifies unique insights on the fast-changing relationship of people with technology and how they aspire to gain more control over in the digital realm. The Global Digital Wellbeing Index provides a country-level benchmark and a path to action for policymakers looking to improve digital wellbeing for the populations they serve.

### **2024 Digital Wellbeing Global Report**

The basis of the new Digital Wellbeing Global Report is a survey of 35,000 digitally connected respondents, all over 18 years of age, in 35 nations across five continents, more than double the number of participants in the first Digital Wellbeing Global Report in 2021. Ithra collaborated with ASDA, ABCW and PSB Insights Middle East to design and complete the largest-of-its-kind survey to provide valuable knowledge on how people view their digital lives.

The findings of the refreshed survey provide unique insights under six relevant themes – Balance, AI, social media, Gaming, Work and Regulations. Among the key findings of the survey is more respondents of all ages across the globe are becoming conscious digital consumers, and a majority now spend the time they want to spend online, rather than losing hours to purposeless scrolling.

### **Introducing the Global Digital Wellbeing Index to drive action towards higher digital**

**wellbeing** Ithra also announced the inaugural edition of the Global Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI), a country-level assessment which ranks 35 countries based on 94 selected indicators derived from policy analysis, statistical data, and survey results across 12 pillars. The index aims to help stakeholders find new evidence-based solutions to optimize opportunities and minimize potential negative impacts of digital technology.

The 12 pillars assessed are: Social cohesion; Mental health; Physical health; Ability to disconnect; Information quality; Cybersafety; Connectivity; Social connectedness; Education and skills; Work, productivity, and income; Entertainment and culture; and Access to services and goods. The research highlights leaders in each of the categories, as well as the areas where policymakers and businesses can focus their efforts.

Ithra's DWI reveals that Canada leads the ranking in digital wellbeing followed by Australia, Singapore, Estonia and France (see table below). Within the 12 pillars, leadership and best

practice emerge from different parts of the world. Examples include Saudi Arabia which excels in connectivity, China which has supportive policies for digital mental health in place and was a front runner in recognizing digital addiction, and Colombia, which is improving digital literacy and awareness for young women through dedicated programmes. The pillars with the lowest scores requiring the most attention from almost all the countries, are Work, productivity and income; Physical health; and the Ability to disconnect.

Rank(out of 35)	Country	Score(0-100)
1	Canada	69.8
2	Australia	69.0
3	Singapore	68.1
4	Estonia	67.1
5	France	66.8

Announcing the findings, Wadha Alnafjan, Head of Digital Wellbeing (Sync) at Ithra, said:

“Accelerating potential and inspiring minds is the core ethos of everything we do at Ithra. This deep data dive for this global survey reflects thousands of hours of hard work by several teams. In

turn, this shows our collective passion, enabling us to better understand how talent and creativity can thrive at home and across international borders in a vastly digital era.”

She added: “These exclusive insights are especially important in today’s world, as we live in the most transformative time in modern human history – and technology is a primary driver of that change. Already, approximately 65% of the global population are online, equating to more than 5 billion people. The DWI clearly shows that the many stakeholders engaged in the digital ecosystem need to take action to ensure that digital technologies have a positive impact on humanity. We hope that this research will enable actors to drive ambitious measures to protect the most vulnerable from negative side effects of technology.”

Fahad AlBeyahi, Lead of Sync’s Research Workstream at Ithra, highlighted the importance of continual improvements: “The benefits of the hyper speed, convenience, and learnings we gain from embracing digitalization in our lives is nigh impossible to summarize. Equally, no system is perfect. Finding solutions to today’s challenges will present even more opportunities, so we must keep learning and exploring.”

He added: “Embedding digitalization into our lives brings endless potential, but also challenges that can be resolved with effective management. The survey highlighted negative and harmful experiences still prevalent across social media, calls for more regulation around artificial

intelligence (AI) and for people to have greater transparency over data collection.”

Top Findings under **Six Key Global Themes of the survey:**

**The top findings of the survey under the six key themes are:**

**A Healthier Balance:**

People are finding better balance in their use of technology and are increasingly aware of its negative impact on their health

**All Eyes on AI:**

Artificial intelligence is dominating people's lives, but many do not understand it

**A New Era of Social Media:**

Countries with more active social media use view it as a force for societal good, but many are concerned about online bullying

### **Gamers Take the Reins:**

Majority of gamers say it has a positive impact on their lives, but for the more avid ones, gaming is an escape mechanism

### **Impact of Flexibility at Work:**

Though digital technology enables hybrid and flexible working, it is affecting personal boundaries

### **Regulations are Vital:**

The public are calling for greater regulation of technology and data collection is their biggest concern

### **Top Findings from the Global Digital Wellbeing Index:**

Support for digital mental health holds great promise for helping vulnerable people.

Dedicated support and awareness for physical health is key to balance growing exposure to digital technologies.

Right to disconnect measures show decisive action to promote digital wellbeing policies and has the potential to be adopted in a larger number of countries.

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

Promoting cyber-wellness is key to counter cyberbullying which remains a challenge in many countries.

Online activism is an important vehicle for social connection and some of the least affluent countries lead the way in this space.

Digital technologies make access to art and entertainment more inclusive.

Many countries have embraced digital education and training, but middle-income countries need to emphasize digital skills, such as digital safety tools or the ability to verify misinformation into curricula.

The report can be downloaded at [sync.ithra.com](https://sync.ithra.com).

### **About Ithra and Sync**

The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra)—meaning “enrichment” in Arabic—was built as part of Saudi Aramco’s vision to be an ambitious initiative for the public. Ithra is the Kingdom’s leading cultural and creative destination for talent development and cross-cultural experiences.

Since its opening in 2018, each attraction by Ithra serves as a window to global experiences, celebrating human potential and empowering creativity. The pillars include culture, creativity, community, art, and knowledge. With the visionary platforms and key pillars, Ithra continuously

offers inspiring workshops, performances, and events. Sync is part of Ithra and uses a rich and continuous body of research to discover the truths about people's relationship between digital usage and our wellbeing.

### **About ASDA' A BCW**

ASDA' A BCW is the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's Public Relations industry pioneer.

ASDA' A was founded in 2000 as an independent communications firm. In 2008, WPP (NYSE: WPP) acquired a majority stake in ASDA' A and merged it with BCW, one of the world's top three communications firms. The agency has a team of nearly 200 professionals across its seven wholly owned offices. With an additional 11 affiliates, ASDA' A BCW covers 16 countries across the Middle East and North Africa. The agency serves over 100 retained clients and is the leading PR consultancy in the MENA market.

### **About PSB Insights Middle East**

We partner closely with our clients to help shape the right questions that most effectively address the business question. With full-spectrum capabilities from ethnographic qualitative research to sophisticated predictive modeling, PSB takes a multi-modal approach to unearthing insights.

Unlike cookie-cutter solutions providers, we integrate the right methodologies required for each engagement to deliver insights that catalyze opportunity. We understand PEOPLE, SCIENCE AND BUSINESS. And we deliver insights that count.

### **About Horizon Group**

Horizon Group is a global insights agency which partners with leading organizations to inform decisions and shape agendas on fast-moving topics that affect our future. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, our dynamic and highly experienced team brings together rigorous, independent research and a global network of experts to produce unique insights and perspectives and translate them into impact for our clients. We collaborate with the most recognized universities, have centers of excellence for index development and foresight. Our flagship indices have received global attention and become international reference points.

