# Crafting a Global digital wellbeing Index for Health ecosystem: off-grid ad hoc digital health

SYNC program at ITHRA embarked on an ambitious journey to gauge this global shift, aiming to discern its repercussions on health and well-being. SYNC is at the forefront of catalyzing a societal shift towards enhanced digital wellbeing. Our approach transforms sophisticated research on technology's escalating role in our daily lives into accessible content and practical tools for the public.

#### Authors:

#### **Affiliations:**

Dr Mamun Rashid\*, Dr Fahad S Beyahi\*, Dr Justin Thomas\*, Yasmin A Aljedawi\*, Ziyad M Alghamdi, Madhawi A Alzamil\*

Correspondence: mdmamunur.rashid@aramco.com

## BACKGROUND

Over three decades, the pivot from a physically connected society to a digital one has deeply affected mental well-being, which now increasingly relies on online activity without physical barriers. By examining 1,000 participants from each country with 122 individual questions, we have not only pinpointed the correlation of mental health with digital presence but also cross-referenced our index with other global indices. This summary underscores the critical findings, with a more extensive analysis available in our extensive dataset.

\* SYNC Research Team, King Abdulaziz Center

for World Culture (ITHRA), Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

## HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Revolutionizing Interconnectivity:**

The internet reshapes societal structures by spawning a comprehensive digital marketplace and facilitating countless virtual connections that eclipse traditional barriers of distance, hierarchy, and class.

#### Social Media's Double-Edged Sword:

Social platforms provide a platform for affirmation and community but simultaneously can induce

Human Development Index (0-1)



BALANCING NEEDS	2		CAPTURING OPPORTUNITIES
1 Social Cohesion	4 Ability to Disconnect	7 Connectivity	10 Work, Productivity, and Income
Ensuring equal access to digital technology opportunities, involving citizens of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds.	The mechanisms and habits that support the healthy use of technology and help set boundaries between using technology and other areas of life.	General access to technology through internet availability. penetration, and affordability – the base pillar that enables other opportunities.	Technology-enabled new wa of working (e.g. remote work and digital nomadism, workin with global teams, using digi online tools to foster creativi increase work efficiency, anc
2 Mental Health	5 Information Quality	8 Social Connectedness	reduce menial tasks), new ty of jobs and ways of income generation, and reduced ban
The ability to use technology in a way that does not undermine, and ideally promotes, mental health for example the use of digital technology to support the provide of the start health	Access to varied online content and the ability to apply critical thinking when navigating it, and the ability to identify false news, non-expert advice, and influence.	Opportunities to stay connected with family and friends, as well as wider social and professional networks. It also includes the opportunity to form online	for micro-entrepreneurship. 11 Entertainment and Culture
the provision of mental health services.	6 Cybersafety	communities that cross physical boundaries.	Technology-amplified exposu to different cultures and mor varied information, and new f
3 Physical Health	Efforts to ensure a cyber environment safe from threats	9 Education and Skills	of entertainment and conten
Refers to mechanisms and habits The ability to use technology in a way that does not undermine and in the ideal case promotes physical health.	such as child pornography, dangerous content, cyberbullying, personal data crimes, and cyber-attacks; as well as the ability to identify and take measures against these threats.	Increased access to education and new forms of learning and sharing knowledge.	Access to Services and Goods Technology-enabled goods a services that cover basic ne and increase life convenienc such as digital financial transactions, online shoppin

1 100 12

Impact of Technology on Health Sy Concern about the impact of smartphones and social media on health have increased since 2021

Q: How concerned are you by the following technologies on your health? (Concerned represents 'Very concerned + 'Somewhat concerned. Not concerned represents 'Not Very concerned + 'Not at all concerned.' Not relevant to me' is



psychological distress and affect individual self-esteem through their interactive mechanisms.

#### The Digital Dilemma:

The challenge of managing the 'stickiness quotient' of digital technologies, which have made disengaging from the online world increasingly difficult, indicating a shift where technology often controls the user instead of the other way around.

#### 0.6 0.5 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 Digital Wellbeing Index (0-100)

## INDEPENDENT COMPONENT ANALYSIS

### **Generational Impact Analysis:**

Examining the varying effects of online content across different age groups. The methodology assesses how exposure to harmful content impacts the behavior and mental health of demographics like Gen Z and Millennials, compared to older generations like Boomers.

## Screen Time Regulation Study:

The willingness of individuals to regulate their screen time and digital engagement. It contrasts the behavioral trends between younger and older generations in terms of proactive measures taken to limit screen time and maintain a healthy online-offline balance.

## **Regulatory Framework Assessment:**

The text suggests a methodology that reviews the impact of current digital regulatory measures and the public's demand for increased regulation. It considers the implications of these controls on overall digital usage and the exposure to upsetting online content, with a view to strengthen them to better protect users.

Impact of Technology on Health Sync The public are finding a balance through better control their use of technology

onths, thinking about the balance between your online and offline lives, would you say the

# **KEY MENTAL HEALTH CARE FINDINGS**

•Only eight countries, mostly high income, have complete frameworks to support digital mental health.

•The United Kingdom, Singapore, and Canada have successfully integrated digital wellbeing into curricula.

•Eight countries, including Singapore can be a source of best practices for the world.

•Lower-middle-income countries performed better than high-income countries in terms of mental health impacts from digital technologies. States reported stronger emotional repercussions from extended digital technology use.

• Sweden, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and France display the strongest repercussions from excessive online activity.

•Lower-middle-income countries reported lower impacts, due to gaps in connectivity, lower disposable incomes, and a lack of leisure time.



Overall DWI performance in the mental health pillar, by country and income level

# FRAMEWORK OF DIGITAL WELLBEING INDEX

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The 2023 Global Digital Wellbeing Survey, a cornerstone of Sync's initiative, has significantly broadened its reach, capturing the sentiments of 35,000 global internet users—a quantum leap from the past survey in 2021. Here's a snapshot of the survey by the numbers:

#### -35,000 respondents:

A diverse cohort representing the global digital community.

#### -35 nations participated:

Expanding the survey's scope by five additional countries compared to the orievious edition.

## **DUAL-EDGE OF DIGITAL WELLBEING**

Digital technology presents vast opportunities but also challenges for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Urgent action is needed to address these challenges globally. Our research supports initiatives to protect against technology's negative impacts. Navigating the digital age demands ongoing efforts to promote digital wellbeing. To aid this mission, we introduce the Digital Wellbeing Index (DWI), a comprehensive study evaluating nations' efforts to balance technology's benefits with wellbeing. The DWI serves as a tool for countries to assess their policies, aiding decision-makers in crafting effective strategies. This report outlines the study, presents its findings, and offers policy recommendations.



Digital regulations sync ... and there is also the belief that there is sufficient controls in place to protect the safety and health of internet users

Q: Which of the following is closer to your opinion (Rebased to exclude 'Don't Know')

Global public	34%	66%	
Middle East and North Africa	48%	52%	
South Asia	41%	59%	
East Asia and Pacific	39%	61%	
North America	30%	70%	
Sub-Saharan Africa	28%	72%	
Europe and Central Asia	27%	73%	
Latin America and the Caribbean	24%	76%	
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#### Adult perspectives:

very participant was over 18 years of age, offering insights across enerations—Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Older Adults.

#### •25-day span:

he survey collection phase, from July 26 to August 2023 ,29, was a edicated period for gathering comprehensive data.

This expansive study not only reflects the current state of digital wellbeing across continents but also sets the stage for informed interventions that can foster a more mindful and balanced digital existence.

## CONCLUSION





Following an extensive SYNC global survey on digital wellbeing, our findings reveal insights into the evolving relationship between technology use and life balance beyond boundaries. A significant %53 of respondents perceive improvement in their technology use over the past year, indicating a positive shift towards a more balanced integration of online and offline activities. This enhancement extends beyond mere efficiency or entertainment, as it is closely associated with mental health benefits such as reduced anxiety, improved stress management, and heightened feelings of connectivity in an increasingly isolated world. Conversely, %42 perceive their situation as unchanged, neither deteriorating nor improving. While this stability may seem positive, it suggests a potential complacency in addressing underlying issues exacerbated by digital overuse, including loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Only a slim %5 report a deterioration in their technology use, highlighting a minority facing significant challenges in maintaining digital well-being, which can adversely impact mental health. These results underscore the urgent need for interventions tailored to enhance digital literacy and promote a healthier, more mindful engagement with technology. They also emphasize the critical importance of promoting a balanced lifestyle in the digital age, where mental health is prioritized alongside physical well-being, ensuring a holistic approach to our digital existence.