

# Digital Business Indicators

A World Bank Group Initiative



## Background

Rapid developments in digital technologies, artificial intelligence and big data have led to the booming of a global digital economy. The digital economy has transformed how markets are structured, how businesses interact, and how consumers obtain goods, services, and information. Such developments challenge policymakers to create regulatory environments that maximize the social and economic benefits of digitization. Governments play an important role in establishing digital infrastructure, ensuring a level playing field among all market players, and building human capital for a digital age. At the same time, policies should also consider the potential risks associated with digital economy, such as taxation and data privacy and security.

To support World Bank client countries in their efforts to better harness the benefits of digital technologies and address the potential risks associated with digital economic activities, several World Bank teams, including the Global Indicators Group of the Development Economics Vice Presidency, the Digital Development Global Practice, and the Macroeconomics, Trade, and Investment Global Practice, launched the Digital Business Indicators initiative in 2017. Inspired by the *Doing Business* report, which has a recognized track record in measuring business laws and regulations in 190 economies to leverage positive reforms, this initiative seeks to develop a benchmarking tool to measure the regulatory environment for the digital economy. The objective is to encourage competition among countries as they move toward more efficient, more transparent, and easier-to-implement regulations for the thriving digital economy.

## Thematic Coverage

Digital Business Indicators team initially identified a few regulatory areas that were deemed central to the productivity of digital business activities and where regulatory reform can have short- and long-term impacts on the investment climate for the digital economy. The team conducted a pilot data collection phase in 2018 across five thematic areas:

Connectivity	Data privacy and security	Logistics	Payments	Digital market regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universal access to broadband</li><li>• Spectrum allocation and management</li><li>• Domain name registration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rights of data subjects</li><li>• Cross-border data transfer</li><li>• Data security and enforcement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Costs associated with low value cross border trade, covering <i>de minimis</i> thresholds, customs duties, and value added taxes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Licensing of payment service provider</li><li>• Payment authorization and processing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• E-documents and e-signature</li><li>• Consumer protection</li><li>• Intermediary liability</li></ul>

Digital Business Indicators initiative plans to expand to cover other key areas such as competition and taxation upon further research and collaboration with government and industry stakeholders.

# Digital Business Indicators

A World Bank Group Initiative



## Geographic Coverage

The pilot phase collected data for 21 countries representing different regions, income levels, and stages of digital development. The Digital Business Indicators initiative aims to reach global coverage in the next two to three years depending on funding availability. The 21 pilot countries are:

Category	Countries
East Asia and Pacific	Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam
Europe and Central Asia	Armenia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia, Honduras, Mexico
Middle East and North Africa	Lebanon, Tunisia, UAE
OECD	France, Korea, Rep.
South Asia	Bangladesh, Pakistan
Sub-Saharan Africa	Burkina Faso, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania

## Data Collection

Digital Business Indicators project is made possible by generous contributions of a network of local partners, including legal experts, private sector representatives (e.g., telecom operators, online merchants, and logistics companies), government officials and authorities, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, and other informed respondents. The data were collected through a set of standardized questionnaires sent to the above-mentioned contributors. Once the data were collected, the study team analyzed the information in conjunction with publicly available data on agency websites and the texts of relevant laws and regulation.

The Digital Business Indicators team is currently conducting methodology refinement for the next phase through consultations with different stakeholders. The team also welcomes if there is any interest in contributing to the project intellectually or financially. Further collaboration among public sector officials, academia, and private sector experts is needed to address the regulatory challenges ahead.

## Contact Information

**Rong Chen**, Economist  
Global Indicators Group  
[rchen5@worldbank.org](mailto:rchen5@worldbank.org)

**Digital Business Indicators Team**  
[dbi@worldbank.org](mailto:dbi@worldbank.org)

For more information, visit our website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/digital-business-indicators>.