

Yizhou Zhao, Master's Student
Scientific Advisor – **A. Kuksa**, Associate Professor o
Polessky State University

This review examines key indices related to the digital development of China and Belarus, based on various global benchmarks. These indices assess the progress of digital economies, government digital services, cybersecurity, innovation, and overall competitiveness, offering a comprehensive view of how these two nations are advancing in the digital era.

1. Global Innovation Index (GII)¹. The Global Innovation Index (GII) evaluates the innovation capacity of countries based on 81 indicators that reflect the country's performance in research and development, quality of institutions, and business environment.

- 2022: Belarus ranked 77th, and China ranked 11th. Switzerland topped the index, while Guinea was the lowest-ranked country.
- 2023: Belarus dropped slightly to 80th, while China maintained its 12th place. Again, Switzerland led the index, with Angola ranked the lowest.
- 2024: Belarus dropped further to 85th, while China remained in 11th position.

While China consistently ranks among the top 20 in global innovation, Belarus has a moderate standing, reflecting its developing innovation capacity, particularly in IT and software development.

2. E-Government Development Index (EGDI)². The E-Government Development Index (EGDI) assesses the preparedness and capabilities of national governments in using ICT for providing public services. This index evaluates the digital government services available to citizens and the level of innovation in public administration.

- 2020: Belarus was ranked 40th, while China was ranked 45th. Denmark topped the index, and South Sudan was at the bottom.
- 2022: Belarus slipped to 57th, and China improved slightly to 43rd. Denmark again led, while South Sudan remained at the bottom.
- 2024: Belarus ranked 77th, while China improved significantly to 35th. Denmark continued to lead the index, with the Central African Republic in last place.

China's significant improvement in e-government development, moving up from 45th to 35th place, indicates substantial efforts in enhancing digital public services. Belarus, though slipping in the rankings, continues to invest in its digital government infrastructure.

3. IMD World Digital Competitiveness Index (WDCI)³. The IMD World Digital Competitiveness Index (WDCI) measures the competitiveness of countries in terms of digital transformation. It looks at the capabilities of countries to adopt and explore digital technologies, as well as their ability to foster a digital economy.

- 2022: Belarus was not ranked, while China ranked 17th. Denmark was the leader, and Venezuela was the lowest-ranked.
- 2023: Belarus was again absent from the list, while China's ranking data was unavailable at the time. The USA took the lead in the index.
- 2024: Belarus was still not listed, and China's data was unavailable. Singapore topped the index.

While Belarus has not been included in this index, China's position in the top 20 indicates its competitive digital economy, supported by significant investments in areas like AI, fintech, and e-commerce.

¹ <https://www.wipo.int/en/web/global-innovation-index>

² <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index>

³ <https://www.imd.org/centers/wcc/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-digital-competitiveness-ranking/>

4. Networked Readiness Index (NRI). The Networked Readiness Index (NRI), compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF), evaluates the readiness of countries to exploit the potential of ICT in terms of infrastructure, business use, and government involvement.

- 2020: Belarus ranked 65th, while China was ranked 54th. Sweden led the index, with Chad at the bottom.
- 2022: Belarus was not ranked, and China was 50th. The USA took the lead.
- 2024: Belarus was not included in the rankings, and China's data was not available. The USA again led the index.

China continues to maintain a solid position in the top 60, reflecting its broad adoption of ICT across businesses and government.

5. Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI)⁴. The Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI), developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), evaluates the cybersecurity readiness of countries, considering their legal framework, technical measures, organizational capacity, and international cooperation.

- 2020: Belarus ranked 97th, while China was in 33rd place. The USA led the index, and Yemen was ranked last.
- 2021: Belarus improved to 56th, while China's ranking data was unavailable.
- 2022: Belarus further improved to 54th, while China's data was not available again.

Belarus has made steady progress in improving its cybersecurity infrastructure, moving up from 97th to 54th. China remains a strong performer in cybersecurity, though data for 2021 and 2022 were unavailable.

Comparative Analysis of Digital Development in China and Belarus:

1. Innovation and Digital Competitiveness: China consistently ranks among the global leaders in innovation, occupying the 11th–12th position in the Global Innovation Index. The country is known for its advancements in AI, big data, and digital industries like e-commerce and fintech. In contrast, Belarus shows a moderate position, indicating emerging progress in the IT sector, with its software outsourcing industry playing a key role.

2. E-Government Development: While both countries have made strides in digital governance, China has seen more significant improvements, reflecting its robust digital infrastructure and large-scale public services delivery. Belarus, on the other hand, has been advancing but faces more challenges in improving the accessibility and efficiency of its e-government services.

3. Cybersecurity and Digital Readiness: Both countries have areas to improve in terms of cybersecurity. China's relatively high ranking in the Global Cybersecurity Index reflects the country's serious focus on cyber defense, while Belarus has made strides in enhancing its own cybersecurity measures.

4. Challenges: While China's digital economy is booming, challenges like internet censorship, privacy concerns, and the digital divide between rural and urban areas persist.

Belarus faces similar challenges, such as the need for greater investment in digital infrastructure and public services, as well as improving the overall digital literacy of its population.

Conclusion. Both China and Belarus show significant achievements in digital development, with China leading the way in most global indices. The country's investments in technology, e-government, and digital infrastructure place it among the world's top digital economies. Belarus continues to develop its digital ecosystem, particularly in areas like IT outsourcing and cybersecurity. The ongoing digital transformation in both countries is expected to continue, with China maintaining its leadership and Belarus steadily improving its digital governance and technological competitiveness. These indices provide a useful framework for tracking the progress of both countries as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

Specific Digitalization Advice for Belarus from Chinese Experience:

1. Invest in Digital Infrastructure: Upgrade and expand broadband networks, data centers, and other critical digital infrastructure to support the growing demand for digital services.

2. Develop Digital Skills and Education: Implement comprehensive digital literacy programs and integrate digital skills into the national education curriculum to prepare the workforce for the digital economy.

⁴ <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx>

3. Promote Innovation in the IT Sector: Support the growth of the IT industry through tax incentives, funding research and development, and creating favorable business environments for startups and tech companies.
4. Enhance E-Government Services: Continue to develop and improve e-government platforms to provide more efficient and accessible public services, leveraging digital technologies to streamline administrative processes.
5. Strengthen Cybersecurity Measures: Establish robust legal frameworks, technical defenses, and international collaborations to protect against cyber threats and ensure the security of digital systems.
6. Encourage Digital Transformation in Traditional Industries: Facilitate the adoption of digital technologies in manufacturing, agriculture, and other traditional sectors to improve productivity and competitiveness.
7. Foster Public-Private Partnerships: Encourage collaboration between government and private sector entities to drive digital initiatives, share resources, and accelerate digital development across various sectors.