



2025



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INTRODUCTION

Enabling more and better jobs: The role of business readiness

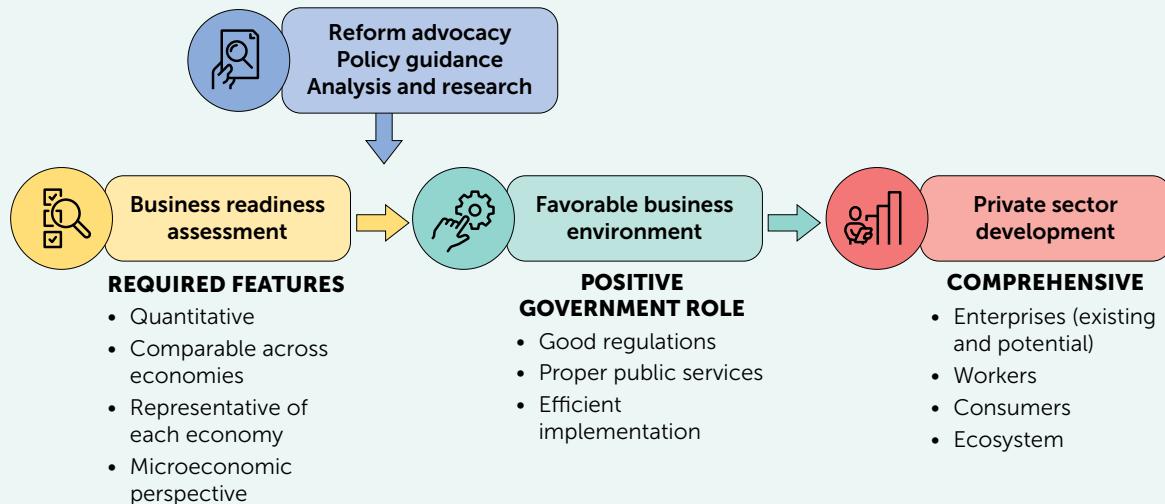
It is impossible to overestimate how important jobs are for individuals, families, communities, and economies. For individuals and families, jobs represent not only the ability to earn a living but also to obtain a sense of identity and self-worth. For communities, jobs are the bedrock of peaceful coexistence, where collaboration leads to cultural, social, and economic benefits that no person alone could even begin to conceive. For economies, jobs are the mechanisms through which individuals and communities contribute to society with labor, ideas, and innovation—and, in turn, earn an income, participate in a multitude of markets where goods and services are traded, and enjoy government-provided infrastructure and services.

Well-functioning economies are places where jobs are plentiful, suitable for workers' skills, and, in short, productive. This is not often the case. Achieving it is a permanent goal of policy makers around the world. To be sure, most people in developing economies, where unemployment insurance is largely missing, do have a job of some sort. This is not enough, however. Subsistence employment, underutilized skills, and misallocated workers are all too common features of struggling economies. What is needed for development and continuous progress, even in advanced economies, is more and better jobs.

This need is particularly acute in economies whose young populations are expanding while economic growth is low. Their vulnerability is evident:

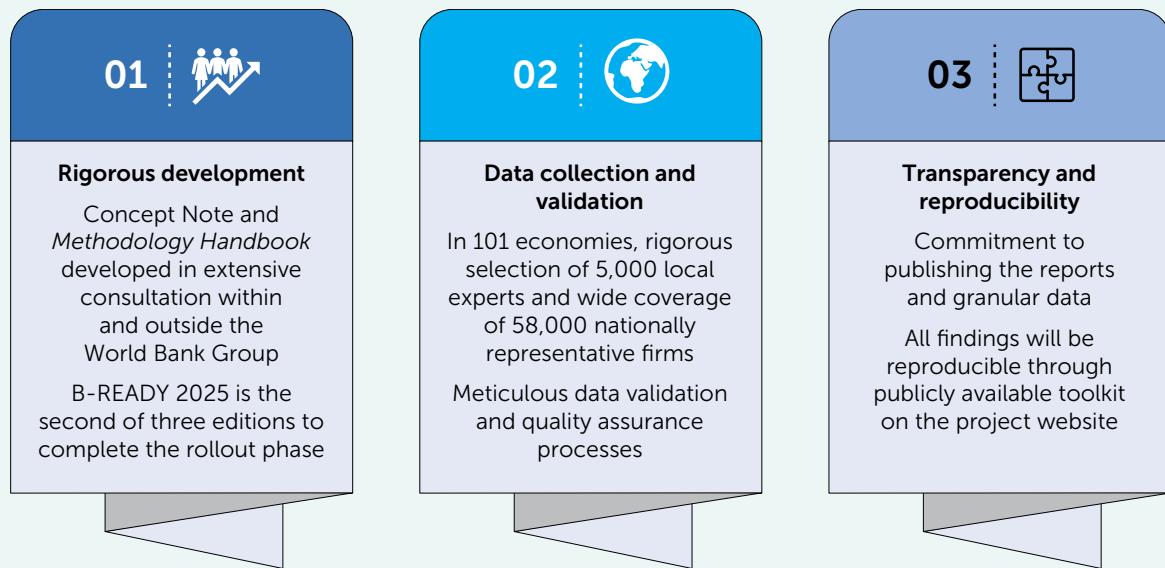
BOX 1.1 B-READY's approach (Continued)

FIGURE B1.1.1 B-READY's comprehensive approach to private sector development



Source: B-READY project.

FIGURE B1.1.2 B-READY's processes, standards, and objectives



Source: B-READY project.

(Continued)

BOX 1.1 B-READY's approach (*Continued*)

B-READY's 2025 data collection spans 101 economies, engaging 5,000 local experts and surveying 58,000 nationally representative firms. This breadth is matched by meticulous validation and quality assurance, guaranteeing the reliability of findings. Transparency and reproducibility are central to the process, with all reports and granular data published and made

accessible through a public toolkit. The processes of collecting and aggregating data, following robust governance safeguards, are described in box 3.2. The project's outputs are designed to be timely and relevant for policy reform, supporting World Bank Group operations, advisory services, policy makers, civil society, and researchers in advancing private sector development.

B-READY 2025 analyzes the results from a jobs perspective. To do so, it combines two lenses: economic and demographic. It asks whether economies that need more and better jobs are more business ready. It concludes—alarmingly—that just the opposite is happening: economies with the largest share of young people expected to join the labor force and currently suffering from low economic growth are the least business ready and, therefore, the most vulnerable.

A framework for linking jobs, growth, and business readiness

The report categorizes economies into three workforce groups based on the share of their young population (younger than 15 years old; refer to figure 1.1):

- **Young workforce economies:** More than 31 percent of the population is younger than 15 years old. These economies face the challenge of generating sufficient job openings and equipping young people with the necessary skills. The private sector is pivotal in expanding labor demand and supporting workforce development.
- **Peak workforce economies:** Eighteen percent to 31 percent of the population is younger than 15 years old. The focus for these economies is maintaining job creation while supporting productivity gains, given the stabilizing working-age population.
- **Mature workforce economies:** Less than 18 percent of the population is younger than 15 years old. These economies face the challenge of fostering job dynamism and adaptability as the labor force shrinks, requiring investment in innovation, automation, and lifelong learning.

FIGURE 1.1 Considering the demographic context of each economy in addressing the jobs agenda



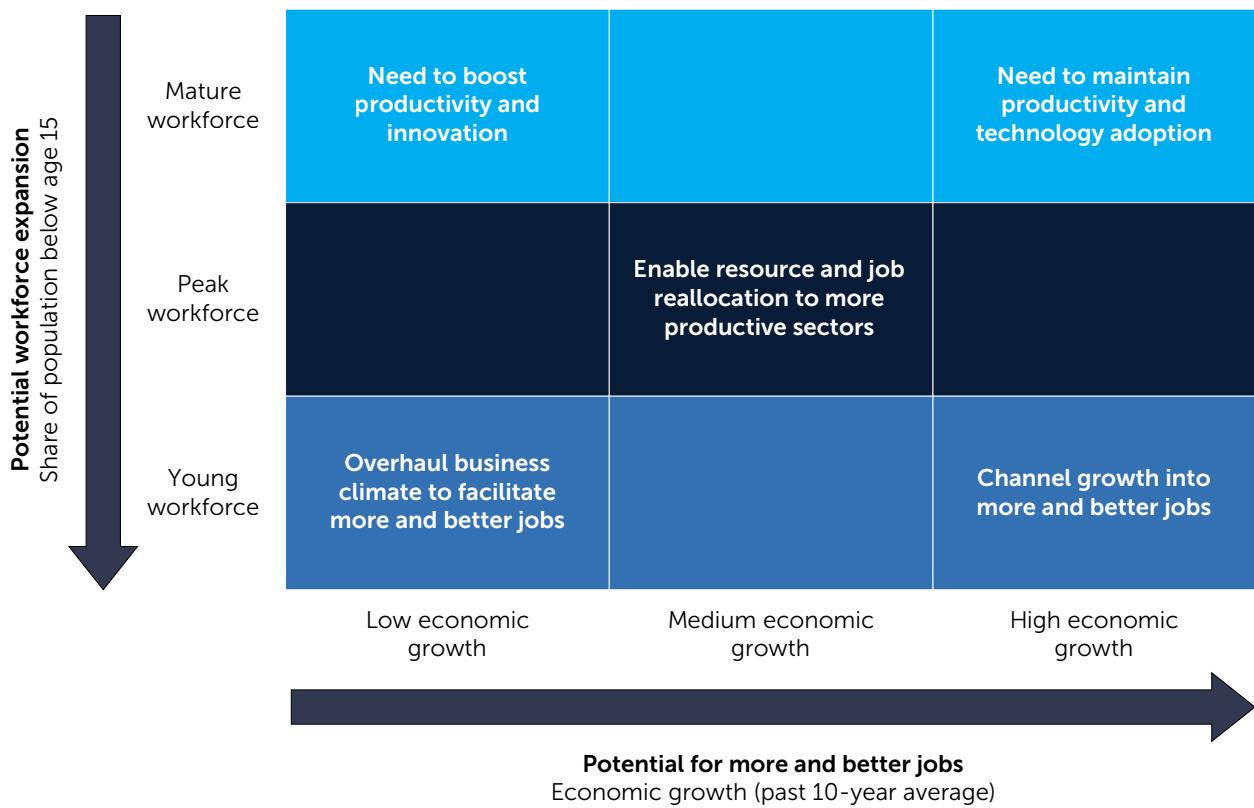
Sources: B-READY project; *World Population Prospects 2024* (UN DESA 2024).

The report introduces a Workforce-Growth Matrix that, without suggesting causality, maps economies based on demographic pressure (workforce group) and medium-term economic growth (low, medium, high) that is measured by the average annual GDP growth rate from the past 10 years. Although fostering a conducive business environment is essential across all economies, this matrix identifies distinct challenges and policy priorities for each of them depending on their placement within the matrix (refer to figure 1.2):

- **Young workforce, low economic growth.** These economies face the most vulnerable situation, with intense pressure to generate jobs amid sluggish growth. Overhauling the business environment is critical to facilitate more and better jobs.
- **Young workforce, high economic growth.** These economies benefit from robust growth but still face demographic pressure. The key challenge is ensuring economic gains translate into more and better jobs, focusing on skills development.
- **Mature workforce, low economic growth.** These economies face aging populations and limited growth. The priority is to spark innovation and reform to kickstart growth and transform it into quality jobs.
- **Mature workforce, high economic growth.** These economies have a balance of aging populations and strong growth. The challenge is to sustain momentum by continuously increasing productivity and adapting the labor market to an older workforce.

The B-READY framework evaluates how ready economies are to support businesses and job creation by looking at three key areas: the Regulatory Framework, Public Services, and Operational Efficiency. These three areas are known as pillars (refer to box 3.1).

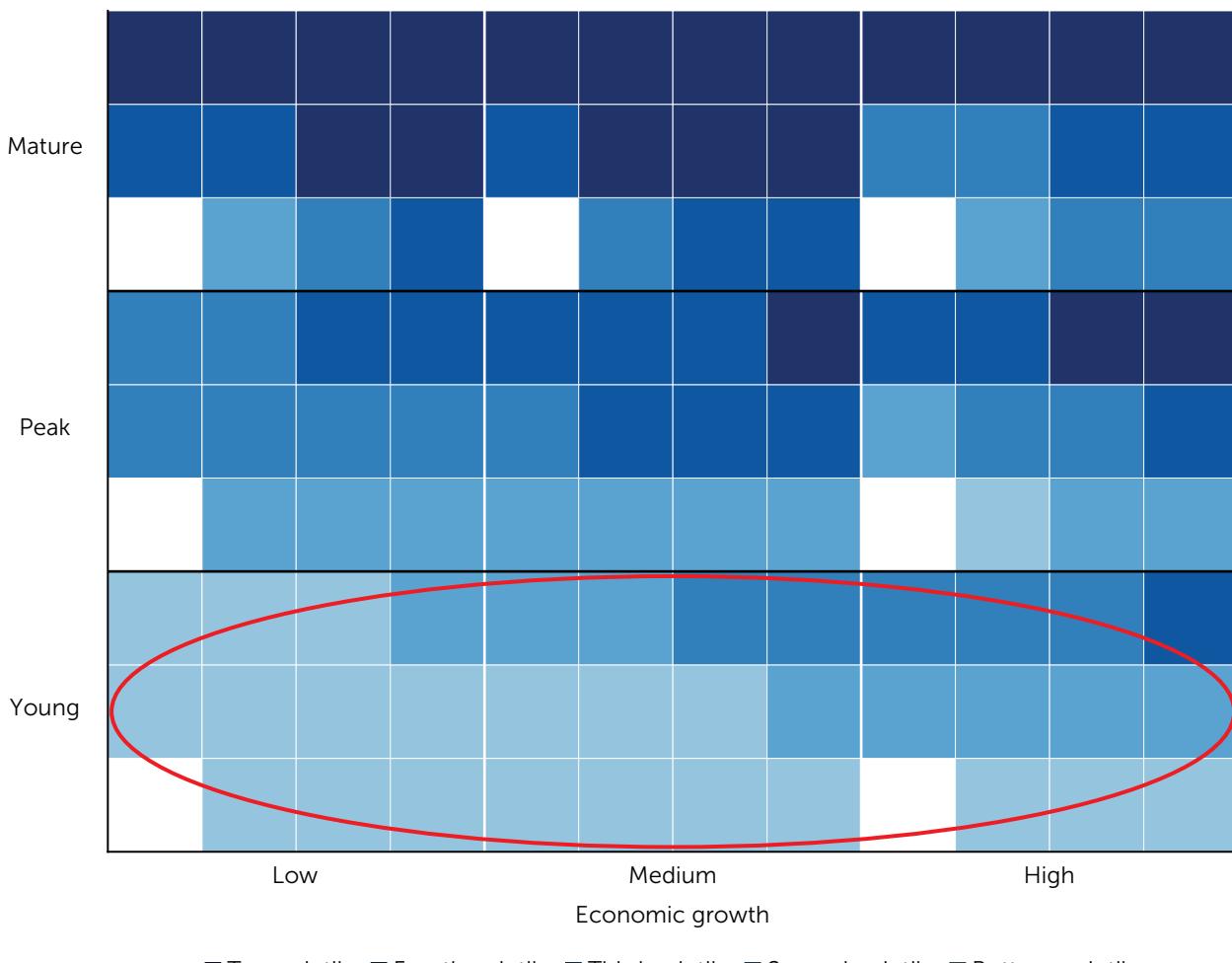
FIGURE 1.2 Where jobs meet growth: The matrix of workforce challenges around the world



Sources: B-READY project; World Bank World Development Indicators 2024 (<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>); *World Economic Outlook* database April 2025 (<https://www.imf.org/en/publications/weo/weo-database/2025/april>); *World Population Prospects* 2024 (UN DESA 2024).

FIGURE 2.1 The economies facing the most critical needs to create jobs are the least business ready

Potential workforce

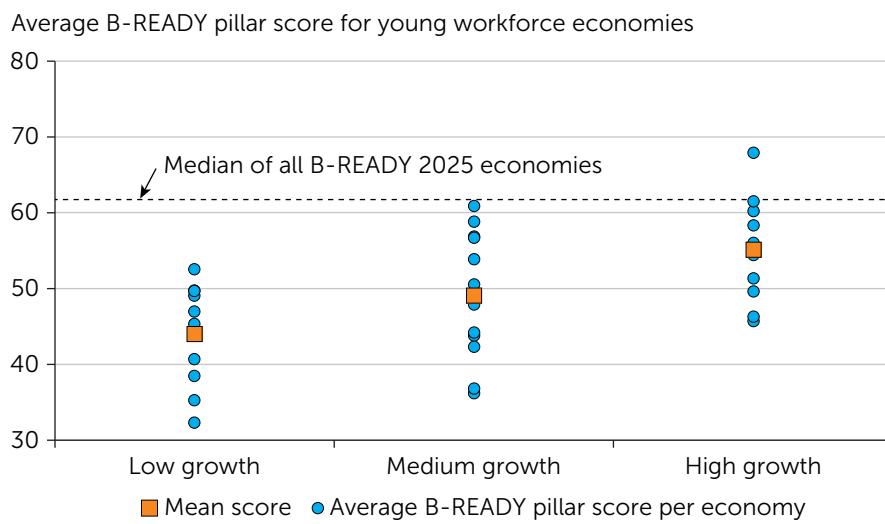


■ Top quintile ■ Fourth quintile ■ Third quintile ■ Second quintile ■ Bottom quintile

Sources: B-READY 2025 data; World Bank World Development Indicators 2024; *World Economic Outlook* database April 2025; *World Population Prospects* 2024 (UN DESA 2024).

Note: The sample comprises 101 economies. This matrix plots economies according to their share of young population (y-axis, with a progressively younger population from top to bottom) and their medium-term economic growth performance (x-axis, increasing from left to right). The y-axis categorizes economies into young, peak, and mature workforce groups based on the proportion of the population under age 15 in 2023, using the sample's 33rd and 66th percentiles: economies with >31.37 of their population under age 15 are classified as having a young workforce; those with between 18.36 percent and 31.37 percent as having a peak workforce; and those with <18.36 percent as having a mature workforce. The x-axis groups economies into low, medium, and high economic growth categories based on average growth during 2014–23, with thresholds calculated separately within each workforce group. For young workforce economies, low economic growth is <1.85 percent, medium economic growth is between 1.85 percent and 4.17 percent, and high economic growth is >4.17 percent. For peak workforce economies, low economic growth is <2.59 percent, medium economic growth is between 2.59 percent and 4.40 percent, and high economic growth is >4.40 percent. For mature workforce economies, low economic growth is <2.09 percent, medium economic growth is between 2.09 percent and 2.94 percent, and high economic growth is >2.94 percent. Each economy is represented by a square, and each of the 9 cells contains economies falling into a given demographic-growth grouping. Within each cell, economy squares are sorted by the average of their B-READY 2025 pillar scores, with darker shades indicating better performance. White cells reflect combinations that do not contain economies, due to the uneven distribution of 101 economies across the 9 cells.

FIGURE 2.2 Young workforce economies with the lowest growth and most critical need for reform are especially not yet business ready



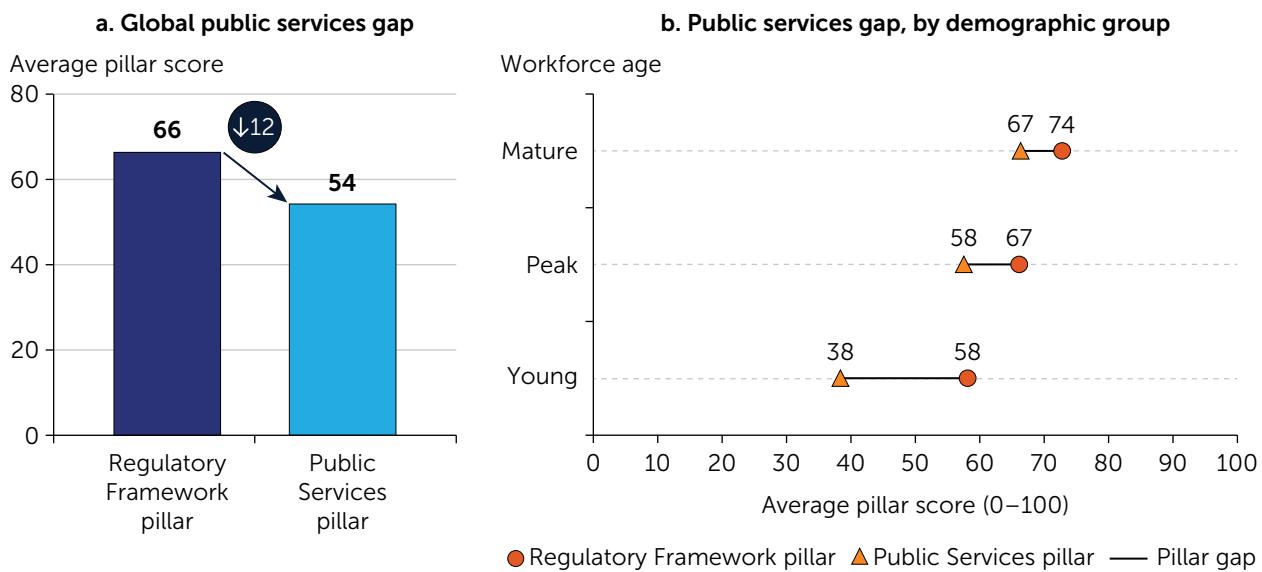
Sources: B-READY 2025 data; World Bank World Development Indicators 2024; *World Population Prospects 2024* (UN DESA 2024).

Note: The figure shows the average of pillar scores for young workforce economies by growth group.

2. Economies find it harder to provide public services that support businesses than to enact laws and rules to regulate them—resulting in a persistent “public services gap.” There is a notable difference between the Regulatory Framework (Pillar I) and Public Services (Pillar II) scores across all regional and income groups (refer to figure 2.3) (for more on pillars and pillar scores, refer to box 3.1), indicating that regulations are often implemented without the necessary public services to support them.

The public services gap is 2.8 times wider in young workforce economies than in mature economies. This gap may make it more challenging for firms to navigate regulations and access services efficiently, limiting the responsiveness of the private sector to job creation demands. Investing in digital infrastructure, modernizing government services, and making information more accessible can close this gap and support business growth.

FIGURE 2.3 All demographic groups, regions, and income levels have a public services gap, but it is almost three times larger in young workforce economies than in mature ones



Sources: B-READY 2025 data; *World Population Prospects 2024* (UN DESA 2024).

Note: Number within the bubble shows the difference between the average Regulatory Framework and Public Services pillar scores.

3. The ease of regulatory compliance and effective use of public services by firms are critical for growth, yet they lag behind regulatory strength—resulting in an “efficiency gap.” This *efficiency gap*, defined as the difference between average scores on the Regulatory Framework pillar (Pillar I) and Operational Efficiency pillar (Pillar III), is observed, on average, across all economies (refer to figure 2.4). There is often a mismatch between rules and how easy they are to follow. This gap reflects government inefficiencies that hinder firms’ ability to fully benefit from strong regulations. Addressing it requires holistic measures to strengthen institutional capacity for the effective operationalization of the rules on the books.

Performance in the Operational Efficiency pillar tends to be higher in economies experiencing high growth, with gaps across growth groups most pronounced among those with a young workforce (refer to figure 2.4). Firms in low-growth economies face significantly more constraints and barriers than their counterparts in high-growth settings. While this association does not imply direct causation, it raises concerns for job creation: in low-growth contexts, these constraints hinder business activity and limit opportunities for generating more and better jobs. Easing such barriers may not instantly transform an economy, but it can help kickstart private sector development and set the stage for

BOX 3.2 How B-READY data are collected and aggregated (Continued)**FIGURE B3.2.1 B-READY builds on expert questionnaires and Enterprise Surveys data****Expert questionnaires**

- Data from experts who regularly deal with business regulations and related public services and institutions
- Provide mainly de jure but also de facto information (Pillar I) and de facto information (Pillars II–III)
- Data collection through 21 questionnaires, filled in by 3–5 experts per questionnaire and economy
- Primarily rely on data from experts in the private sector
- Updated annually for each economy

Enterprise Surveys

- Data from a representative sample of registered firms
- Provide de facto information
- Data collection embedded in the World Bank Enterprise Surveys (expanded from 15 to about 60 surveys a year)
- Survey data obtained from company owners or managers
- Updated every 3 years for each economy

Sources: B-READY project; World Bank 2025b.

Note: For the B-READY report, expert consultations were conducted using September 1, 2024, as the reference point. Enterprise Surveys were conducted at different times between December 2021 and March 2025, in economies where safety and security conditions were in order.

APPENDIX A: PILLAR SCORES

The overall pillar scores for each of the three pillars—Regulatory Framework, Public Services, and Operational Efficiency—calculated by taking the simple average of the corresponding scores across the 10 B-READY topics. B-READY pillars are scored on a scale from 0 (*worst performance*) to 100 (*best performance*). Table A1.1 presents the three pillar scores for each of the 101 economies covered in B-READY 2025.

TABLE A1.1 B-READY 2025 pillar scores

(high = 100; low = 0)

Pillar I—Regulatory Framework (average = 66.32)	Pillar II—Public Services (average = 53.97)	Pillar III—Operational Efficiency (average = 60.03)
First quintile		
Czechia	80.73	Korea, Rep.
Greece	79.46	Italy
Spain	79.35	Spain
Poland	79.02	Estonia
United States	78.67	Latvia
Korea, Rep.	78.51	Croatia
Slovak Republic	78.45	Singapore
Romania	78.07	Canada
Croatia	78.05	Colombia
Portugal	77.93	United Kingdom
Moldova	77.76	Türkiye
United Kingdom	77.65	United States
Singapore	77.64	New Zealand
Ireland	77.13	Czechia
Georgia	76.99	Portugal
Bulgaria	76.98	Slovenia
Latvia	76.94	Kazakhstan
Serbia	76.23	Belgium
Italy	76.18	Georgia
Montenegro	75.80	Slovak Republic
Estonia	75.58	Israel

(Continued)

TABLE A1.1 B-READY 2025 pillar scores (*Continued*)

Pillar I—Regulatory Framework (average = 66.32)	Pillar II—Public Services (average = 53.97)	Pillar III—Operational Efficiency (average = 60.03)		
Second quintile				
Slovenia	75.03	Hungary	68.42	Belgium
Colombia	74.98	Poland	68.34	United States
Hungary	74.71	Taiwan, China	68.03	Malaysia
Belgium	74.08	Costa Rica	67.06	Iceland
Philippines	73.86	Sweden	67.06	Croatia
North Macedonia	73.62	Greece	66.91	Moldova
Israel	73.03	Bahrain	66.89	Slovenia
Armenia	72.91	Bulgaria	66.51	Bulgaria
Costa Rica	72.69	Ireland	66.43	Kazakhstan
Rwanda	72.54	Romania	66.12	Romania
Azerbaijan	71.92	Armenia	66.05	Bhutan
Canada	71.80	Hong Kong SAR, China	65.32	Barbados
Hong Kong SAR, China	71.03	Uzbekistan	65.12	Mauritius
Sweden	70.54	Morocco	64.55	Tajikistan
Cyprus	70.43	Mexico	64.18	Spain
Morocco	70.06	Moldova	64.05	Malta
Mexico	69.54	Malaysia	63.41	Montenegro
Uzbekistan	69.52	Peru	63.24	Italy
Kazakhstan	69.51	Azerbaijan	62.68	Poland
Taiwan, China	69.38	Indonesia	62.00	Kyrgyz Republic
Third quintile				
New Zealand	69.22	Serbia	61.53	Azerbaijan
Ghana	68.88	Togo	60.92	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Benin	68.55	Cyprus	60.53	Türkiye
Côte d'Ivoire	68.46	Rwanda	59.81	Greece
Peru	68.25	North Macedonia	59.75	Armenia
Jordan	67.90	Mauritius	59.48	Eswatini
Bahrain	67.50	Jordan	57.97	Jamaica
Senegal	67.42	Benin	57.87	Botswana
Iceland	67.35	Tanzania	57.87	Lao PDR
Uruguay	67.32	Philippines	57.82	Turkmenistan
Ecuador	67.22	Jamaica	57.07	Portugal
Malta	67.22	Paraguay	56.11	Pakistan
Kyrgyz Republic	67.20	Ecuador	56.02	Israel
Viet Nam	67.03	Iceland	55.84	Jordan

(Continued)

TABLE A1.1 B-READY 2025 pillar scores (*Continued*)

Pillar I—Regulatory Framework (average = 66.32)		Pillar II—Public Services (average = 53.97)		Pillar III—Operational Efficiency (average = 60.03)	
Türkiye	66.81	Malta	55.59	Colombia	59.06
Togo	66.26	Pakistan	54.58	Indonesia	59.01
Mali	65.99	Viet Nam	53.93	Samoa	58.31
Indonesia	65.61	Kyrgyz Republic	51.88	Bangladesh	57.77
Malaysia	65.61	Montenegro	51.85	Togo	57.38
Mauritius	64.69	Ghana	49.99	Seychelles	57.35
Fourth quintile					
Botswana	64.38	El Salvador	49.40	Senegal	56.74
Namibia	64.21	Uruguay	48.68	Cameroon	56.63
Jamaica	64.07	Barbados	48.39	Cabo Verde	56.55
Angola	63.88	Côte d'Ivoire	46.94	Cyprus	56.44
Cabo Verde	63.71	Botswana	45.37	Cambodia	56.17
Congo, Dem. Rep.	63.61	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.25	Nepal	56.15
Burkina Faso	63.23	Bangladesh	45.14	Morocco	55.71
Paraguay	63.12	Trinidad and Tobago	44.83	Uruguay	55.57
Cambodia	63.06	Namibia	44.57	Tanzania	55.25
Tunisia	62.56	Senegal	44.00	Costa Rica	55.15
Bosnia and Herzegovina	62.55	Cambodia	43.14	Ecuador	55.11
Pakistan	62.31	Tunisia	43.02	Peru	54.85
Tanzania	61.92	Nepal	42.04	Tonga	54.25
Barbados	61.67	Bhutan	41.87	Benin	54.22
Nepal	61.46	Eswatini	41.12	Lesotho	54.19
Trinidad and Tobago	61.16	Burkina Faso	40.86	Tunisia	52.46
Madagascar	60.37	Tajikistan	40.35	Mexico	52.45
Tajikistan	59.81	Lesotho	39.27	Ghana	51.73
Eswatini	59.70	Seychelles	39.09	Philippines	51.45
El Salvador	59.08	Angola	37.48	Vanuatu	51.40
Fifth quintile					
Cameroon	58.75	Cameroon	36.30	West Bank and Gaza	51.36
Seychelles	58.73	Lao PDR	35.62	Paraguay	51.32
Sierra Leone	56.96	Mali	35.40	El Salvador	50.37
Samoa	56.77	West Bank and Gaza	35.03	Burkina Faso	49.98
Vanuatu	55.85	Cabo Verde	34.54	Madagascar	49.95
Lesotho	55.58	Samoa	34.23	Trinidad and Tobago	49.68
Papua New Guinea	55.28	Vanuatu	33.64	Namibia	48.90
Gambia, The	53.97	Papua New Guinea	33.46	Côte d'Ivoire	47.90

(Continued)

TABLE A1.1 B-READY 2025 pillar scores (*Continued*)

Pillar I—Regulatory Framework (average = 66.32)		Pillar II—Public Services (average = 53.97)		Pillar III—Operational Efficiency (average = 60.03)	
Bangladesh	53.01	Madagascar	33.40	Mali	47.51
Central African Republic	52.78	Tonga	32.34	Congo, Dem. Rep.	46.97
Congo, Rep.	52.21	Sierra Leone	30.00	Angola	45.85
Bhutan	52.19	Turkmenistan	28.60	Gambia, The	45.79
Chad	51.78	Gambia, The	27.22	Sierra Leone	45.61
Lao PDR	50.88	Congo, Dem. Rep.	26.56	South Sudan	45.36
Turkmenistan	50.46	Congo, Rep.	24.90	Congo, Rep.	45.03
West Bank and Gaza	49.67	Timor-Leste	24.20	Equatorial Guinea	44.01
Tonga	45.35	Chad	23.40	Papua New Guinea	42.69
Equatorial Guinea	44.93	Central African Republic	22.21	Timor-Leste	41.58
Timor-Leste	42.78	Equatorial Guinea	16.84	Chad	40.22
South Sudan	36.04	South Sudan	15.51	Central African Republic	35.48

Source: B-READY 2025 data.

Note: The economies are listed in order of their scores in each of the three pillars. Scores range from a low of 0 to a high of 100. Economies are further grouped in quintiles, which are marked with varying shades of blue (with darker shades representing better performance and higher quintiles).