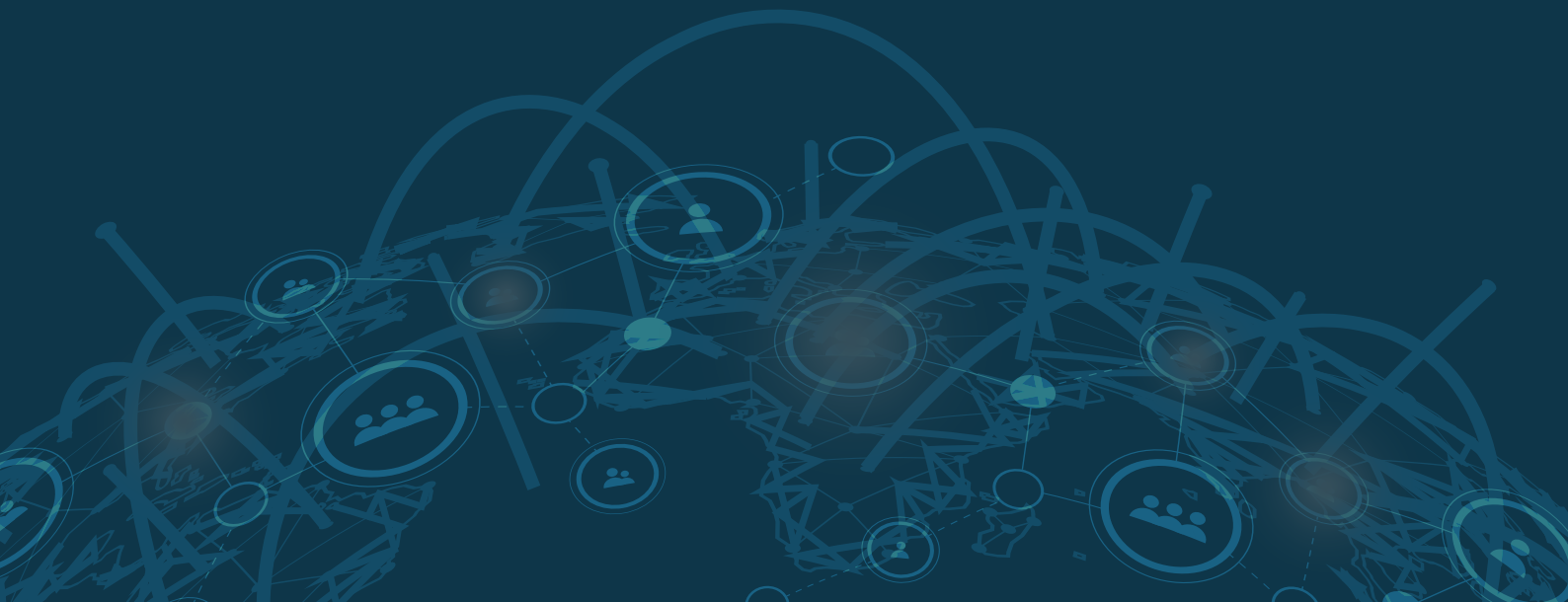




**MSBN**

Myanmar Sustainable  
Business Network

# Digital Rights Report



# Introduction

Launched in November 2022, the Myanmar Sustainable Business Network (MSBN) is a multistakeholder platform bringing together businesses and professionals committed to building a more sustainable economy in Myanmar through responsible business practices. Our community gathers 440+ professionals.

The development of technology in Myanmar has been extraordinary between 2010 and 2020: according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the share of individuals using internet went from less than 1% in 2010 to 35% in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, according to a recent report published by Datareportal,<sup>2</sup> Myanmar had in early 2023:

- 🌐 23.93 million internet users when Myanmar's population was 54.38 million.
- 🌐 15 million social media users, of which 97% use Facebook, 75% use Facebook Messenger, 9% use Instagram, and 5% LinkedIn.
- 🌐 64.60 million active cellular mobile connections.

However, the digital landscape has dramatically changed in Myanmar after February 2021, when the Myanmar military seized power.<sup>3</sup> DigitalReach notes, in a recent report, that in 2021 and 2022, various practices were common, including nationwide internet restrictions, blocking of social media platforms, restricting the use of virtual private networks, increasing the costs to access the Internet, amending laws related to digital space, using enhanced surveillance systems, etc. All of this severely impacts digital rights in Myanmar and especially free access and use of the Internet.<sup>4</sup>

In this challenging context, MSBN members are very much interested in digital rights: when they register, members are asked to select their areas of interest among 20 topics. With 28% of the members interested, digital rights rank 5 after corporate governance, human rights due diligence, environment & biodiversity and climate change. As a result, MSBN organised specific events for its members on data security and privacy. The recording of these events is available on MSBN's website for its members.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB), one of the MSBN's partners, continued to provide feedback to various actors on digital rights: in 2022, MCRB submitted input to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the right to privacy in the digital age<sup>6</sup> and on the practical application of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) to the tech sector.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, MSBN felt it was important to provide input to the UN Global Digital Compact (UNGDC).

<sup>1</sup> See data shared by the World Bank [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> See : <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-myanmar>

<sup>3</sup> Free Expression Myanmar has published a [timeline](#) of the impacts on free expression after 1 February 2021. They also recently published a [new report](#) summarising the main impacts on digital rights.

<sup>4</sup> Myanmar Witness released in January 2023 a report on [digital battlegrounds](#) in Myanmar, with a focus on the impacts on women online.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.myanmarsbn.org/>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/news/mcrb-submits-input-ohchr-right-privacy.html>

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/news/guiding-principles-tech-sector.html>

# Methodology

We developed an online questionnaire to survey our members and Myanmar people. The questionnaire included 10 questions, available in Myanmar and English. MSBN shared the survey on its social media accounts and directly by email with its members.

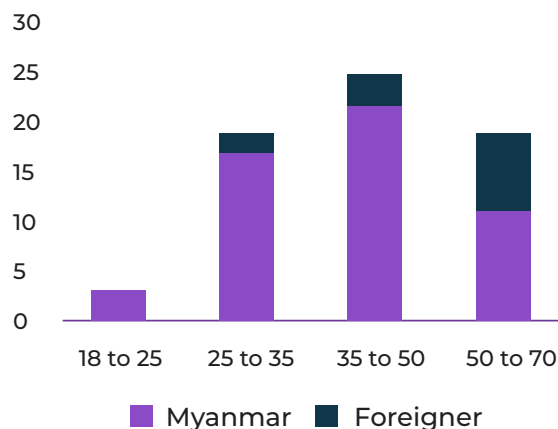
The respondents were asked to select their top priorities among the following:

#	Priority	Description
1	Connect all people to the internet	Ensure that everyone in Myanmar can access the Internet regardless of where they live and their personal situation.
2	Avoid internet fragmentation	Remove all the limitations that block people to access freely all the contents, social media platforms, etc.
3	Protect data	Organisations collecting information about their customers/users/stakeholders should protect these data.
4	Apply human rights online	Support, respect and protect human rights both online and offline.
5	Accountability for discrimination and misleading content	Eliminating fake news, unchecked and misleading contents is crucial to empower people to access trustworthy contents.
6	Regulation of artificial intelligence	Ensure that Myanmar entities set proper rules and guidelines to use responsibly AI tools.
7	Digital commons as a global public good	Develop standards and policies to strengthen Myanmar digital space, while making sure it remains a public good.

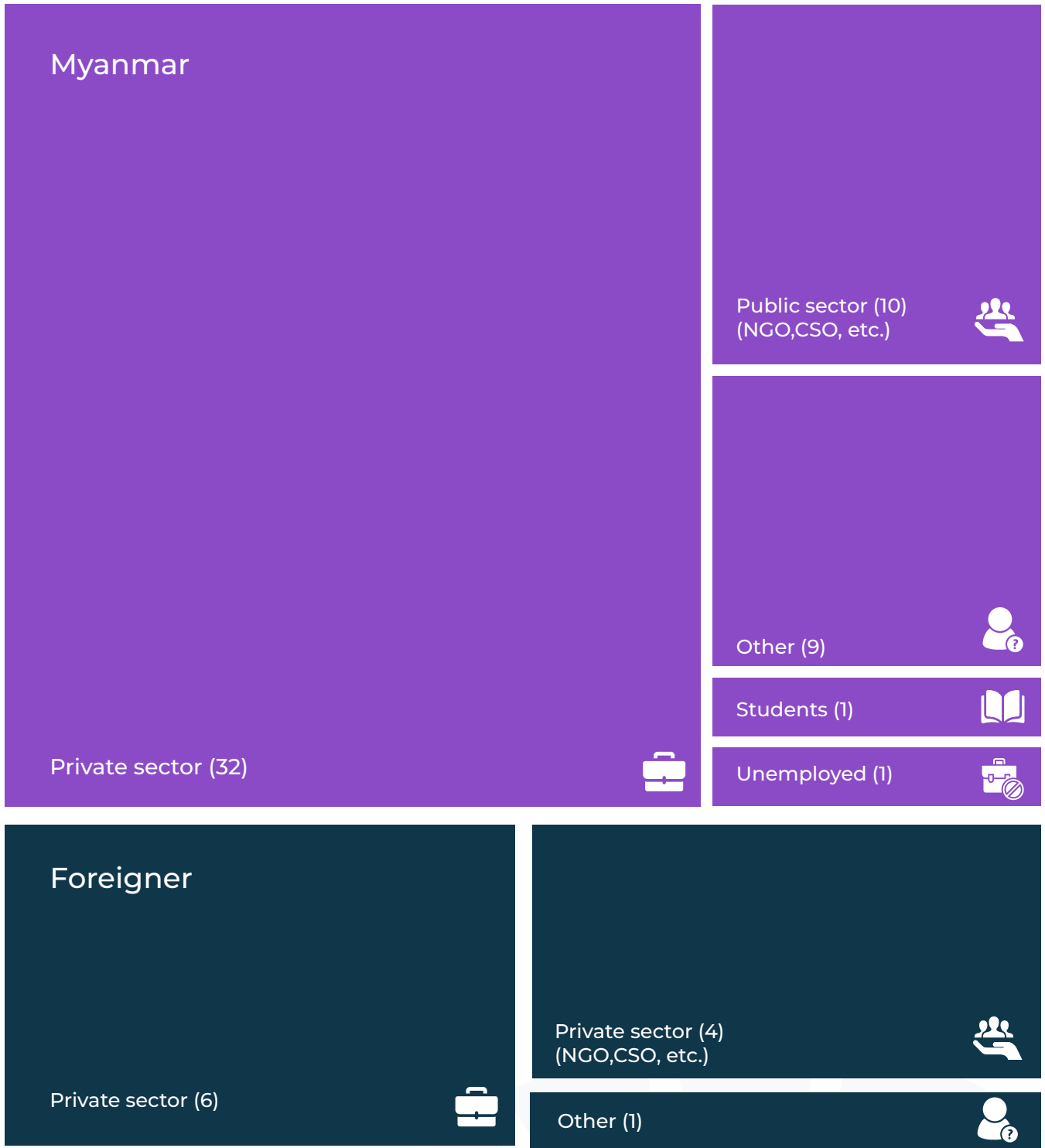
The survey was accessible for one month, between 27 February 2023 and 31 March 2023. We received 64 contributions. The details on the respondents are provided below:

- 83% of the respondents were Myanmar citizens, and 17% were foreigners.
- 5% of the respondents were between 18 and 25 years old, 30% between 25 and 35, 39% between 35 and 50, and 27% over 50 years old. A detailed breakdown between the different age groups and the citizenships is provided in chart 1.
- 59% of the respondents work in the private sector, 22% in NGOs and CSOs, 2% are students, 2% are unemployed, and 16% prefer not to share their current occupation. A detailed breakdown between the citizenships and the occupation is provided in chart 2.

**Chart 1 - Distribution of the respondents by age group and citizenship**



**Chart 2 - Distribution of the respondents by occupation and citizenship**



■ Myanmar ■ Foreigner

# Findings

## Key points

When asked about their top priority for Myanmar to enhance its digital landscape, we observe in chart 3 that:

- 🌀 28% of the respondents selected digital commons as a public good<sup>8</sup>
- 🌀 16% data protection
- 🌀 16% ensuring that everyone could access the Internet.

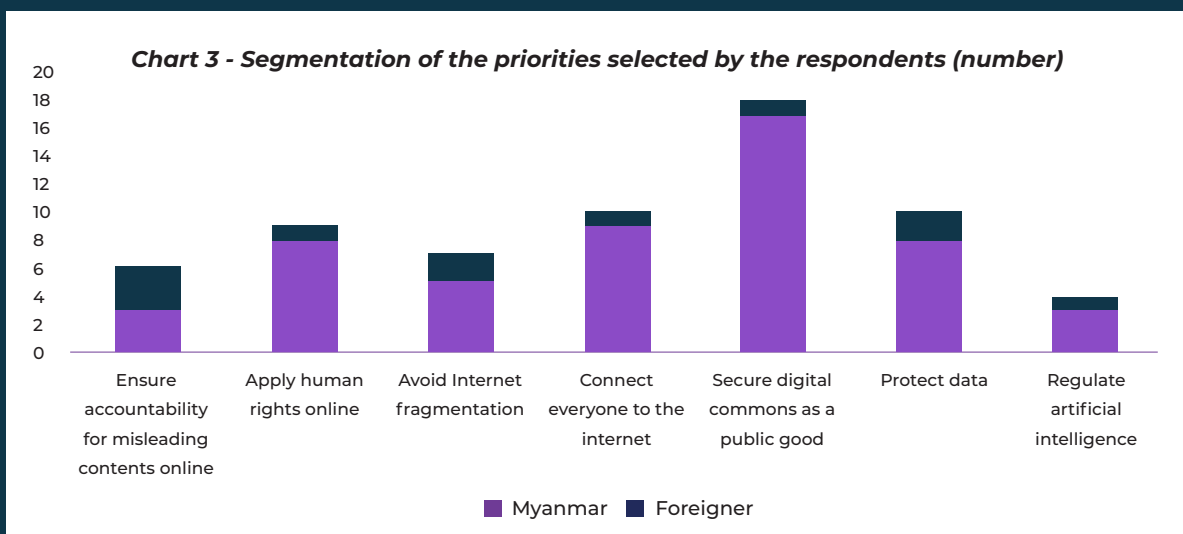
However, when we look at different factors, such as the age and citizenship of the participants, we can notice that:

- 🌀 Foreigners tend to prioritise two topics: accountability for misleading contents online and avoiding the internet fragmentation (see chart 4).
- 🌀 Age influences prioritisation as well. Proportionally, people over 50 years old did not consider AI regulation a priority but were mostly concerned about ensuring Internet access to everyone. People below 25 years old focused on ensuring accountability for misleading content online, data protection and digital goods (see chart 5).
- 🌀 Finally, for the occupation, only one priority was chosen by all the different types of occupation: digital commons as a public good (see chart 6).

These findings inform decision-makers and can enable them to develop conducive actions and programmes in Myanmar by targeting audiences with areas that interest them the most. It could help identify the what or the focus of the digital agenda in Myanmar. But what about the how?

When we asked the respondents to provide us with their ideas to help advance the agenda of the UNGDC in Myanmar, they mostly suggested focusing on:

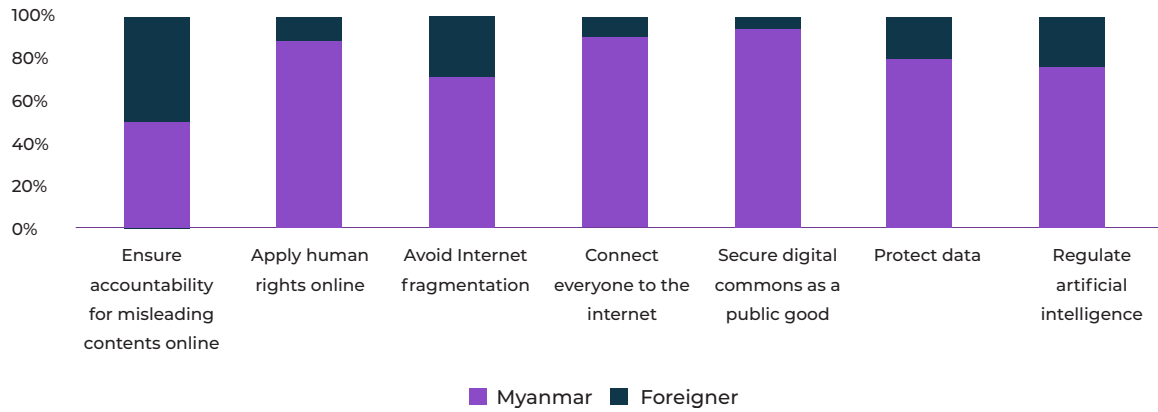
- 🌀 awareness raising and capacity building
- 🌀 ensuring free access to the internet both from a geographic and economic point of view
- 🌀 data privacy
- 🌀 tackling misleading content online, and
- 🌀 supporting the economy.



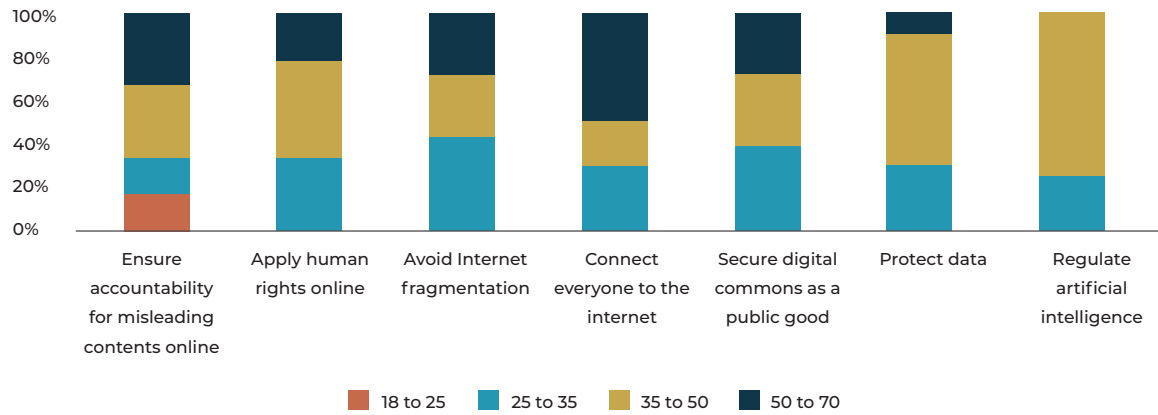
<sup>8</sup> The UNGDC explains in this [1-pager](#) that “to unlocking a more equitable world, a global effort is needed to encourage and invest in the creation of digital public goods: open source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards and open content. (...) Digital public goods should adhere to privacy and other applicable laws, standards and best practices, do no harm. These should also and help attain the Sustainable Development Goals.”

<sup>9</sup> We notice that the UNGDC has a [workstream on digital capacity building](#) and a [dedicated online platform](#). However, the database does not allow people to search for specific contents in Myanmar language. Likewise, it could support the translation of regional tools in Myanmar language, such as the [Digital Security Community Directory](#) or the [Totem project](#).

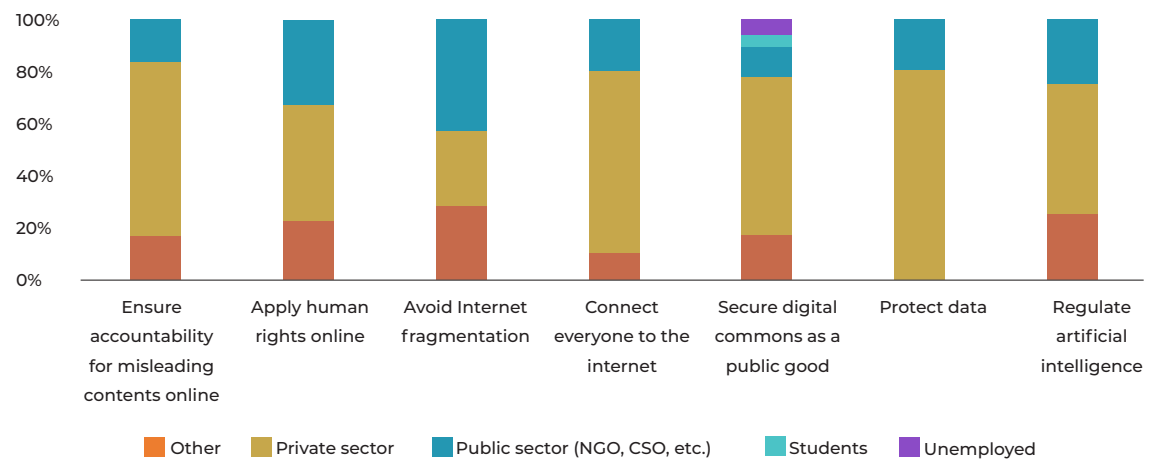
**Chart 4 - Segmentation of the priorities selection by the respondents (%)**



**Chart 5 - Segmentation of priorities based on the age of the respondents (%)**



**Chart 6 - Segmentation of priorities based on the occupation of the respondents (%)**



**Chart 7 - Triggers to activate to enhance the digital landscape in Myanmar according to respondents**

