



Iraqi Startups' Ecosystem Monitor

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KAPITA's Research team deeply thanks and appreciates all experts who contributed to this study. And we sincerely thank GlZ for being an outstanding enabler for us.

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Introduction

39 million

Population (2019) (World Bank Data)

4.4%

GDP growth % (2019 annual % change)
(World Bank Data)

\$11.3 thousands

GDP per capita (2019: PPP,
international \$) (World Bank Data)

Score: 44.7/100
Rank: 172/190

World Bank Ease of Doing Business
Rating (2020)

Globally, the engine of economic growth is the private sector and its drivers are entrepreneurs. Unicorn startups are not a necessity for the economy to grow, but small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are.

The fall in global oil prices, over-reliance on imported products, conflicts and corruption, all adversely affected the development of the private sector in Iraq. Therefore, the number of industrial and agricultural SME declined from 77 thousand in 2000 to less than 26 thousand in 2016 occurred in Iraq.

Since 2003, the internet was made widely available and accessible to Iraqis after it was limited to universities and some ministries. This availability made it possible for the Iraqi youth to connect with the world and technology.

Communities of programmers, designers, photographers and others started to emerge. Fikra Space, the first makerspace, was established in 2012 and Startup Weekend Baghdad took place for the first time in 2013. Also, the first co-working space, The Station, was opened in 2018. Through such communities and events, the concepts of entrepreneurship and startups were made popular among the Iraqi youth supported by local and international agencies.

A startups ecosystem has been gaining momentum recently supported by communities in universities, and support organizations with the funding and help of many local and international agencies in order to facilitate the founding of more successful startups and SMEs. People involved in the ecosystem are actively collaborating through shared projects and events. As startups' ecosystems are generally defined by the network of synergies among people, organizations and their environment. They can be represented by many types but are usually better known as startups' ecosystems of specific cities or online communities.

Iraq ranked the 172nd in the 2020 version of the World Bank's Doing Business report. A report that measures regulations directly affecting the ease of doing businesses worldwide. Iraq showed a constant decline of its score from 46.06 in 2016 to 44.7 in 2020. Startups have no special regulations and usually demand further support.

This study aims to evaluate the ecosystem from different aspects, each called a framework, based on experts' evaluations.

Methodology

We adopted a questionnaire-based methodology developed by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) program to interview experts and gain insights about mainly nine entrepreneurial frameworks. Five additional frameworks were added to the questionnaire which did not affect the selection of the experts (i.e. experts were mainly selected based on their expertise within main nine frameworks).

The questionnaire is a reliable measurement tool and can be used to make comparisons with other countries. Also, it can be repeated periodically to identify the changes in the ecosystem of a certain country.

In a relatively young ecosystem, it was not possible to develop a representative sample of experts and then draw a random sample from it.

Thus, a convenience sample was used and the questionnaire was administered to 20 experts of both genders and different age groups (usually, the GEM program adopts a convenience sampling and includes at least 36 experts from each country).

A team of experts in entrepreneurship developed a list of experts to be interviewed who are knowledgeable about the nine domains of the questionnaire. These experts could be individuals in governmental institutions, universities, consulting firms, financial agencies or established entrepreneurs. The experts were not limited to a certain geographic area or a certain industry.

A limitation of this approach is the limited sample size as the team of experts could miss some potential respondents.

The different indices of the questionnaire can be answered using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “completely false” to “completely true”. The recent questionnaire of the GEM used a 9-point Likert scale. Thus, a linear transformation of the weighted averages of each framework on the 9-points scale to the 5-points scale was conducted using the following equation (suggested by IBM): $Y = (5-1)*(x-1)/(9-1)+1$

Demographic questions and questions about the experience of experts were added to allow for comparisons.

Methodology

The questionnaire was delivered electronically using Survey Monkey. Each expert was contacted by email and was briefed about the anonymity and confidentiality of the response. The time needed to fill the questionnaire ranged between 20-25 minutes.

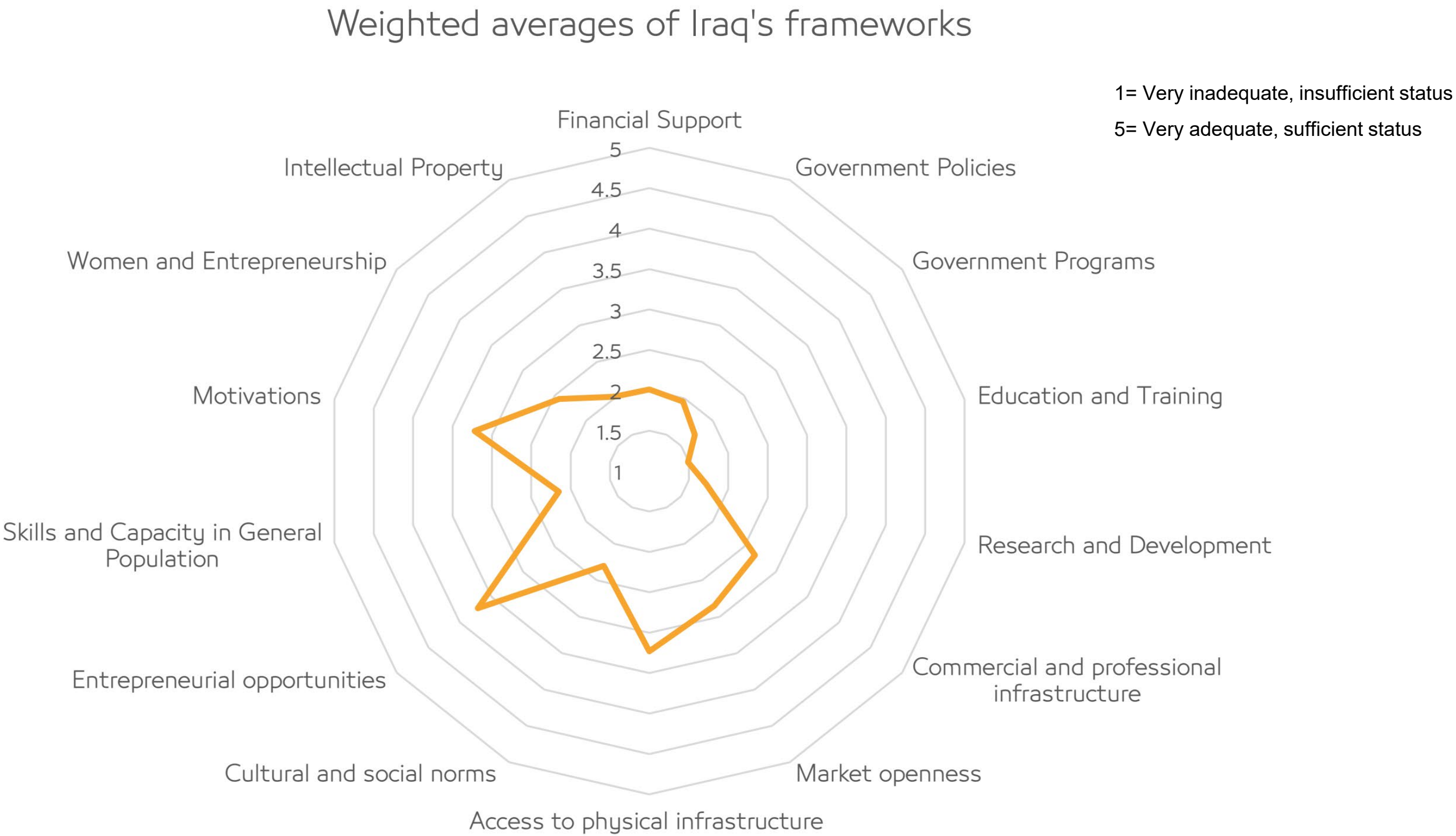
Survey Frameworks included :

1. Financial support for new and small firms
2. Government policies to support new and small firms
3. Government programs to support new and small firms
4. Education and training, with emphasis on new and small firms
5. Research and development transfer to new and small firms
6. Commercial, legal infrastructure relevant to new and small firms
7. Internal [within the country] market openness
8. Access to physical infrastructure for new and small firms
9. Cultural, social norms that encouraged new and small firms
10. Presence of entrepreneurial opportunities in the country
11. Availability of skills and capacity to implement new firms in the general population
12. The presence of motivations to create new firms in the general population
13. Support for the participation of women in entrepreneurial initiatives
14. The presence of conditions that would provide protection for intellectual property rights

Iraq's Frameworks

Iraq has a high level of entrepreneurial opportunities and motivations for youth to establish new firms. These frameworks with other relatively adequate frameworks gives the entrepreneurial ecosystem a great potential to develop.

However, the lack of sufficient research and development, education, governmental programs and policies, in addition to limited financial support, halter the possible development and result in having more opportunities for the creation of new firms than there are people able to take advantage of them.

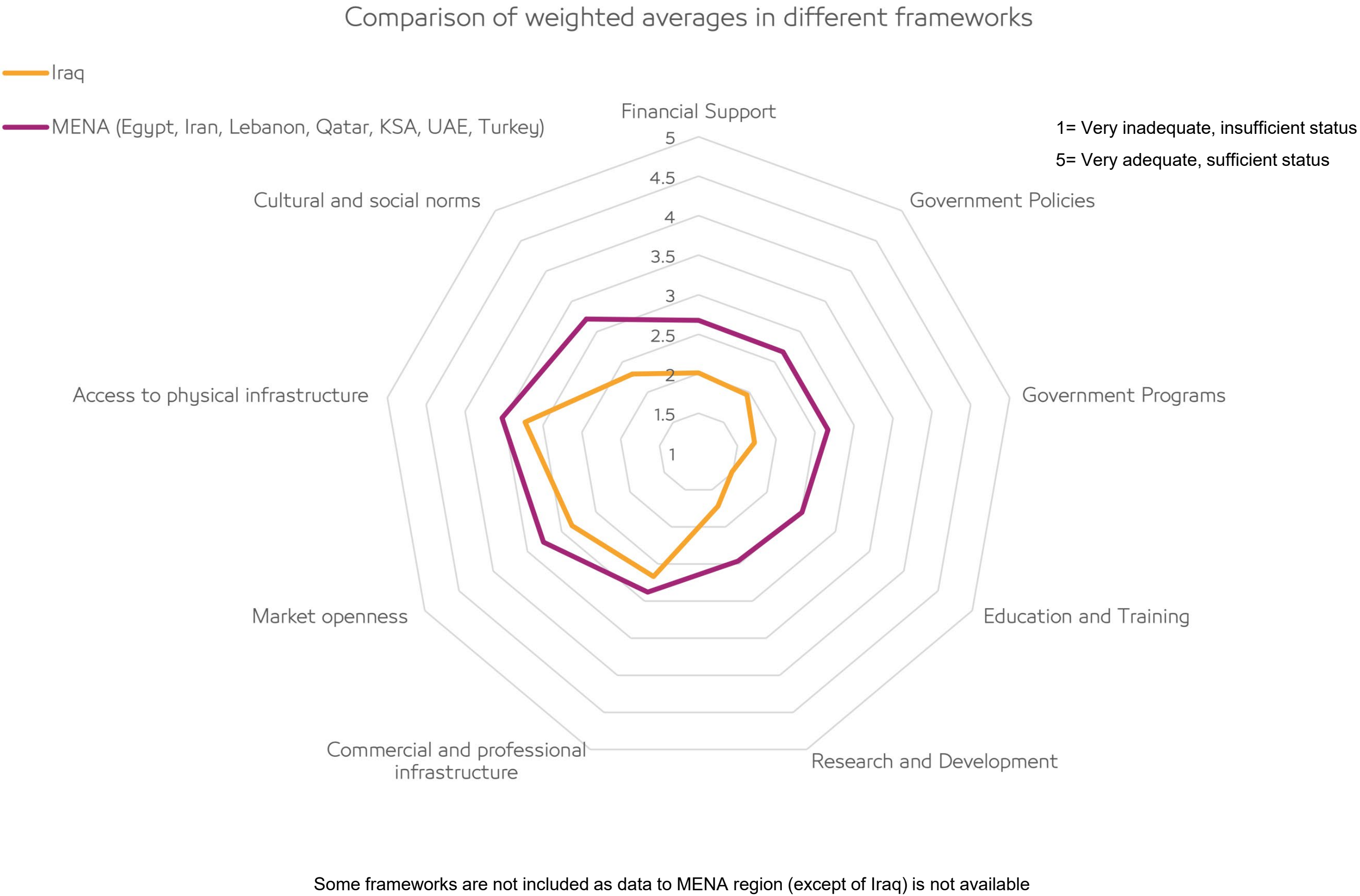


Frameworks of MENA Region

Iraq got scores below the average of MENA countries across all frameworks with variable gaps between frameworks.

A special focus should be given to develop Education and Training, Research and development, and governmental policies and programs as the gap with MENA countries is noticeably big.

A thorough planning and cooperation between all stakeholders of the entrepreneurial ecosystem are needed to develop the current situation and achieve the goals of private sector development.

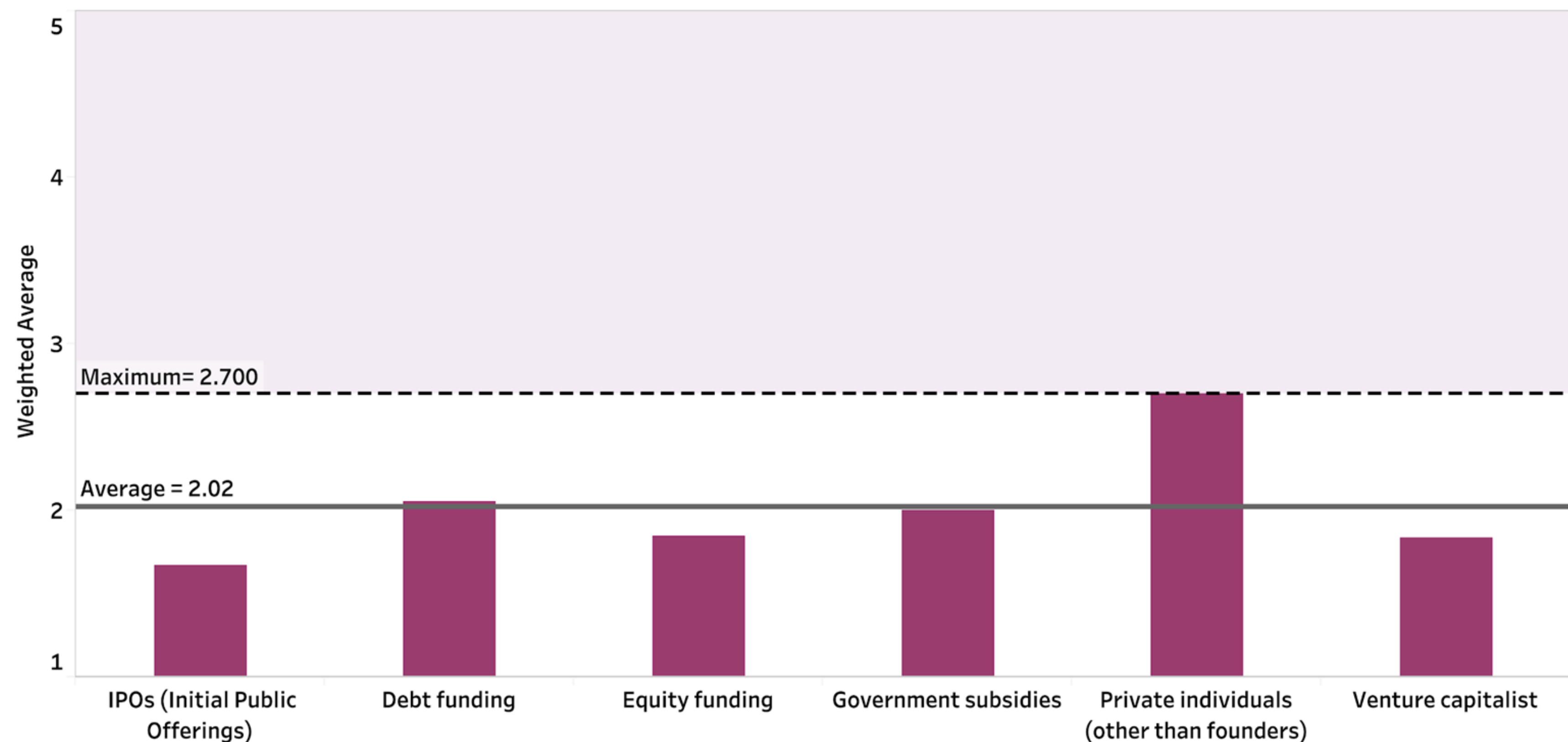


Financial Support

This framework examines the level of funding available to nascent firms and is measured by the sufficiency of equity funding, government subsidies, debt funding, venture capitalists, initial public offerings and funding from private individuals (other than founders).

The items of the framework are:

- 1) Sufficient funding available through IPOs (Initial Public Offerings) for new and growing firms
- 2) Sufficient debt funding available for new and growing firms
- 3) Sufficient equity funding available for new and growing firms
- 4) Sufficient government subsidies available for new and growing firms
- 5) Sufficient funding available from private individuals (other than founders) for new and growing firms
- 6) Sufficient venture capitalist funding available for new and growing firms

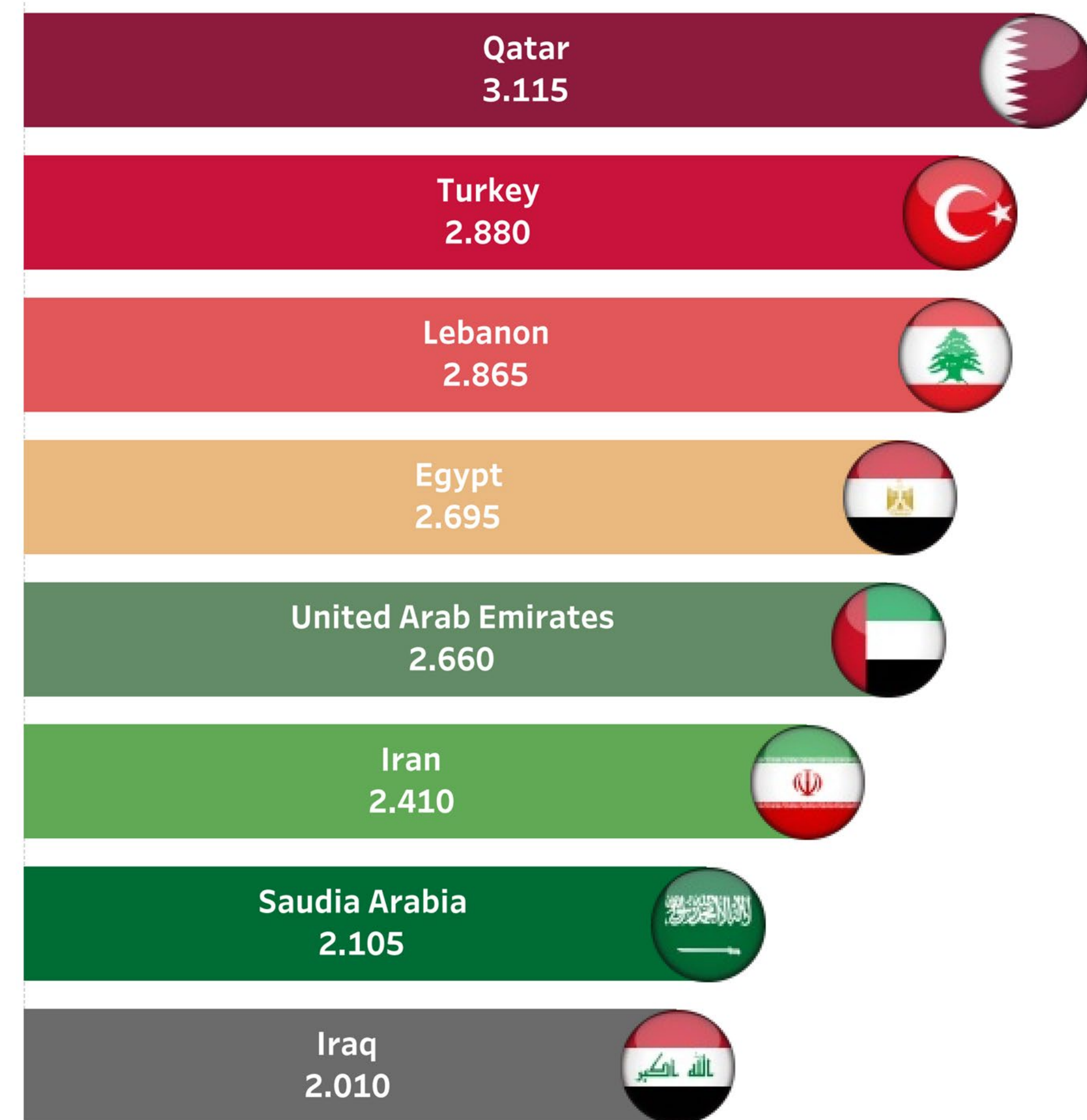


Financial Support

Finance is crucial in forming, expanding and sustaining firms. It is the catalyst that transforms promising ideas into a growing business.

Nowadays in Iraq, entrepreneurs are facing major challenges due to the lack of funding options. Even though many initiatives established like the CBI's initiative – Tamwil - to finance SMEs through low-interest loans, the regulations to get loans are cumbersome and require a public sector employee as a guarantor or a property guarantee.

Since funding available from private individuals is at a relatively better status, it reflects the potential to develop private capital as a source of funding for startups and SMEs. This can be done by encouraging more private individuals to invest, such as activating angel networks and SME dedicated private funds to expand funding options and the overall economic activity in Iraq.

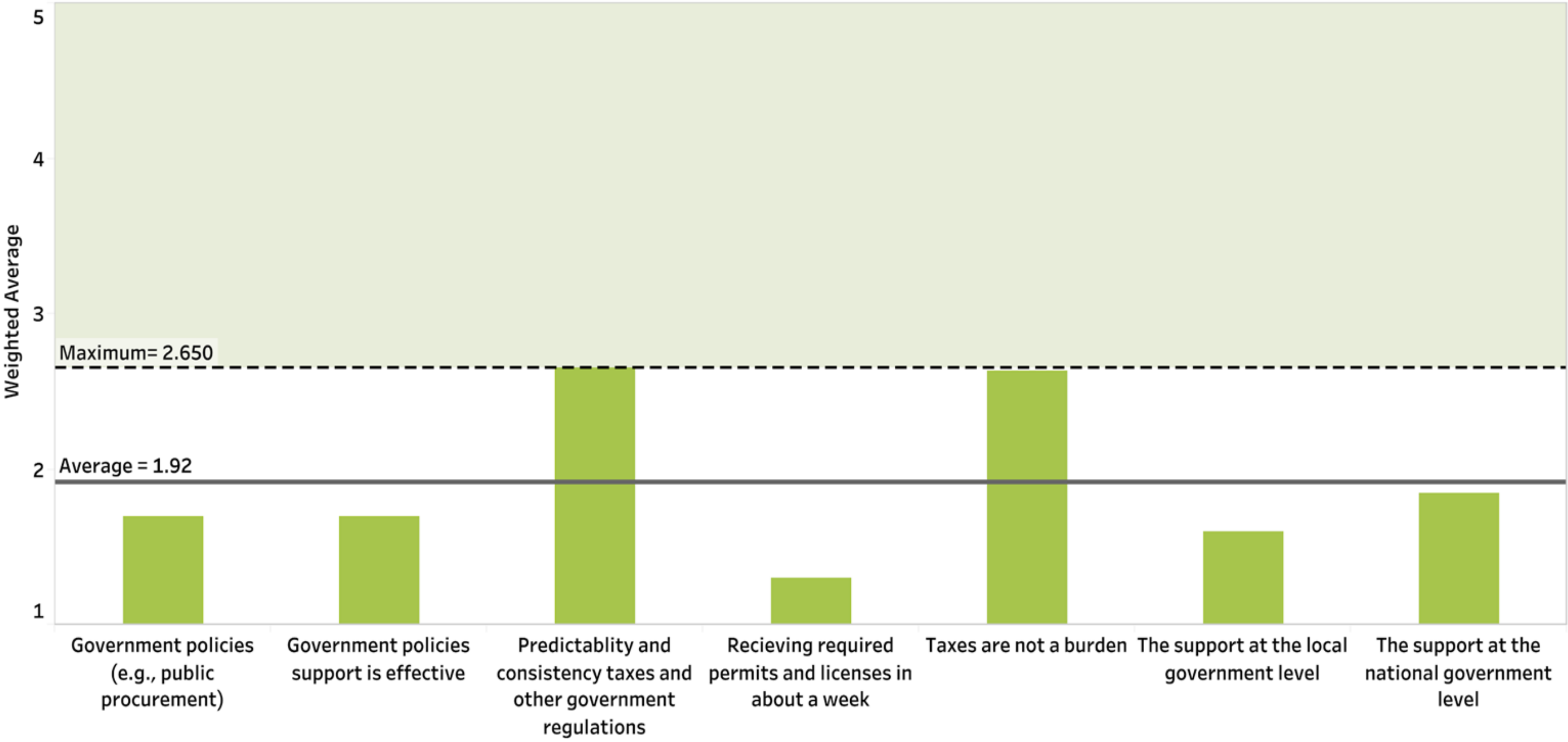


Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Government Policies

This framework examines the level of support governmental policies provide to nascent and new firms. Examples of these policies include business-friendly bureaucracy, taxes and priority to new firms when setting national policy. Local experts felt that policy-makers place low priority on new and growing businesses. Several areas of government policies such as taxes, licensing and regulations were also rated low by local experts

- The items of the framework are:
- 1) The Government policies (e.g. public procurement) consistently favor new firms
 - 2) Government policies aimed at supporting new and growing firms are effective
 - 3) Taxes and other government regulations are applied to new and growing firms in a predictable and consistent way
 - 4) New firms can get most of the required permits and licenses in about a week
 - 5) The amount of taxes is not a burden for new and growing firms
 - 6) The support for new and growing firms is a high priority for policy at the local government level
 - 7) The support for new and growing firms is a high priority **for policy at the national government level**

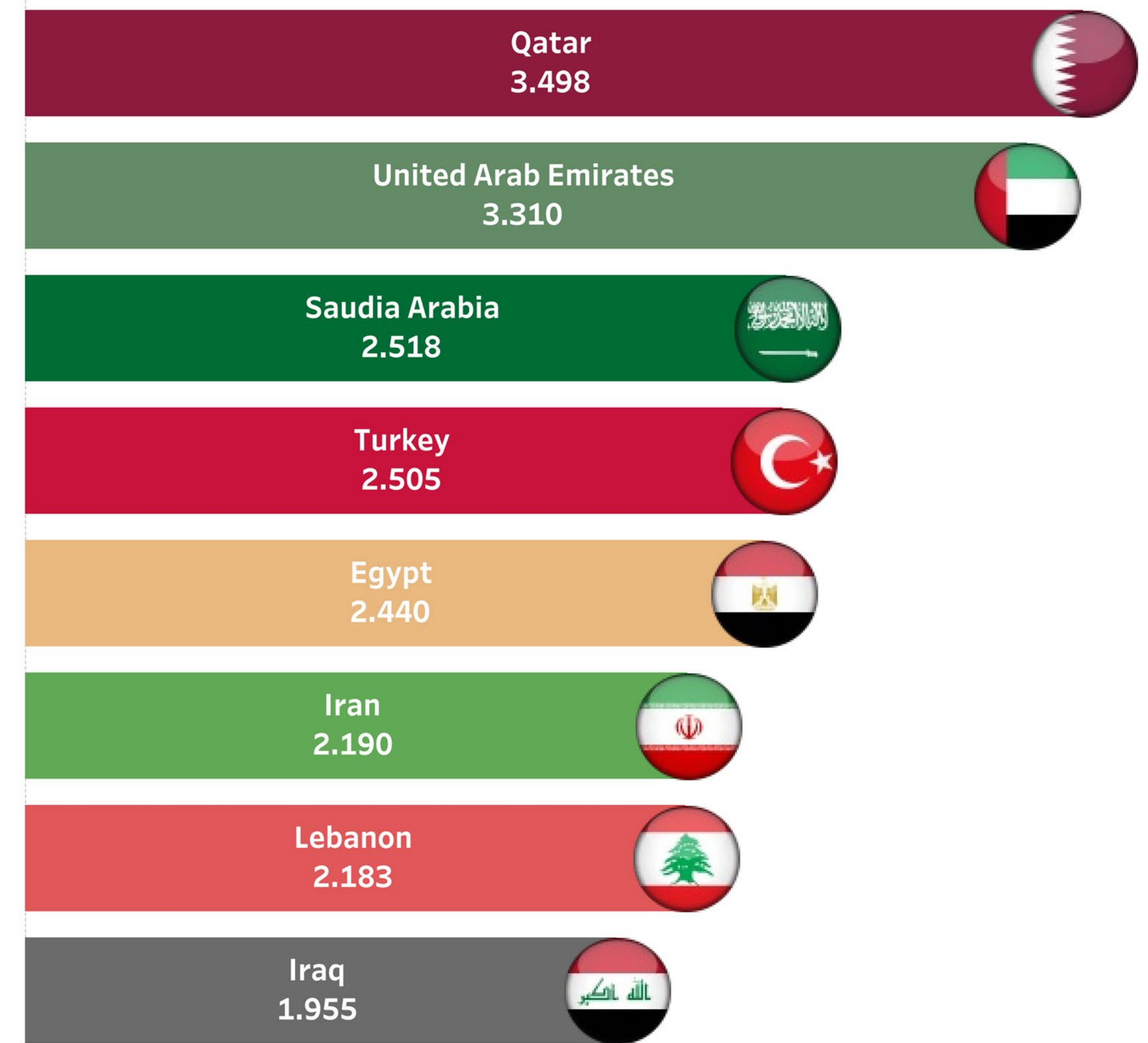


Government Policies

The Ease of Doing Business index by the World Bank ranked Iraq as the 172nd country out of the 190 countries in Index.

Governments make policies that help regulate the process of initiating, growing and sustaining businesses and make sure they contribute to developing the economic activity of the country. Taxation, issuing licenses, public procurement and national/local regulations are among the most significant factors when it comes to start-ups. Although these policies differ between countries, experts evaluated governmental support provided to Iraqi firms as low compared to other countries of the region.

The challenges related to governmental policies restrict individuals from taking the risk of establishing a new firm. Policy-makers need to be oriented and well-acquainted with the Iraqi market, so they can come up with practical, less strict and more convenient policies that can support and nourish the ecosystem.



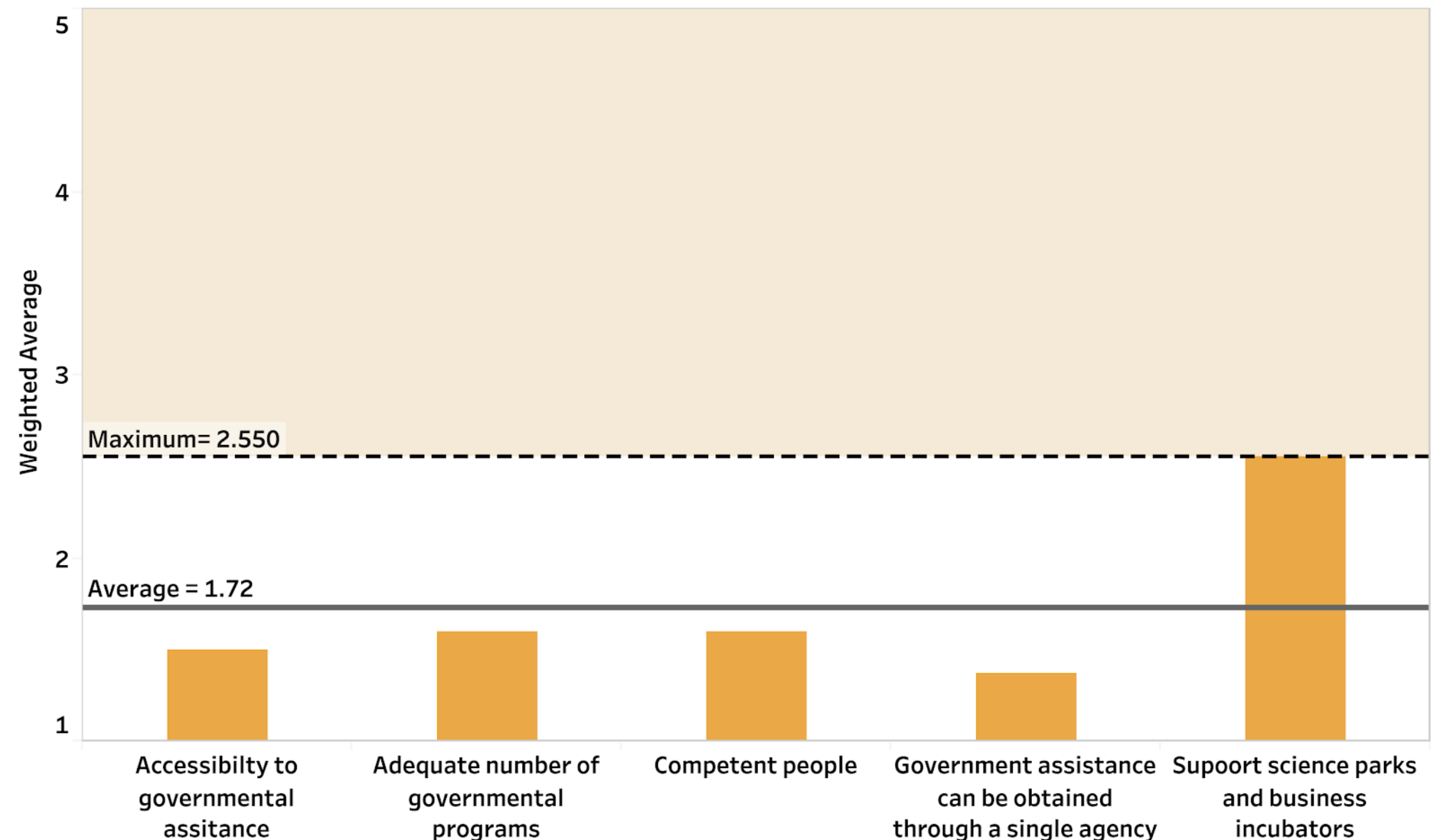
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Government Programs

This framework examines the level of support governmental programs provide to nascent and new firms. Examples of factors examined include the number of government programs, the level of competency of these programs, and the efficacy of the programs in helping early-stage entrepreneurs. Iraq ranked the lowest among the selected economies. Local experts generally agreed that government programs are inadequate and ineffective in supporting new and growing firms. The lowest aspect was contacting a single agency to obtain assistance

The items of the framework are:

- 1) Almost anyone who needs help from a government program for a new or growing business can find what they need
- 2) There is an adequate number of governmental programs for new and growing firms
- 3) The people working for government agencies are competent and effective in supporting new and growing firms
- 4) A wide range of government assistance for new and growing firms can be obtained through contact with a single agency
- 5) Science parks and business incubators provide effective support for new and growing firms

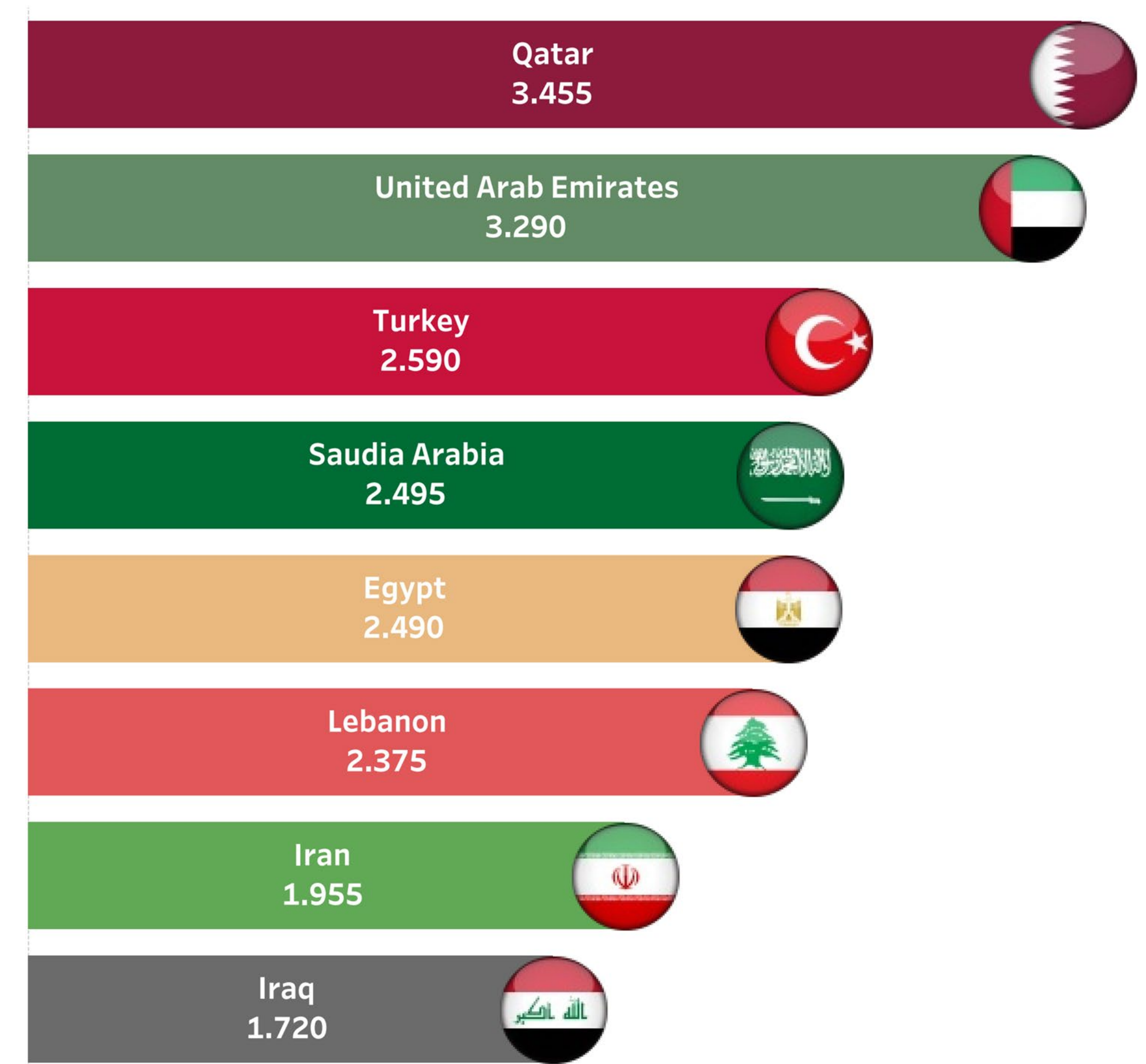


Government Programs

Many governments strive to run programs dedicated to those willing to become entrepreneurs by encouraging them to innovate, nourishing them with skills and knowledge needed to invest in themselves, so they can eventually end up fulfilling concrete projects with benefits to the country.

Entrepreneurship awareness and training programs in Iraq are usually associated with international organizations, local non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Government has very little involvement in such activities.

Business parks and one-stop shop for business registration are essential to develop the a proper entrepreneurial ecosystem. Also, training programs related to entrepreneurship need to be offered through incubation programs, under- or postgraduate university training programs (and other institutional programs), and women entrepreneurship empowerment programs.



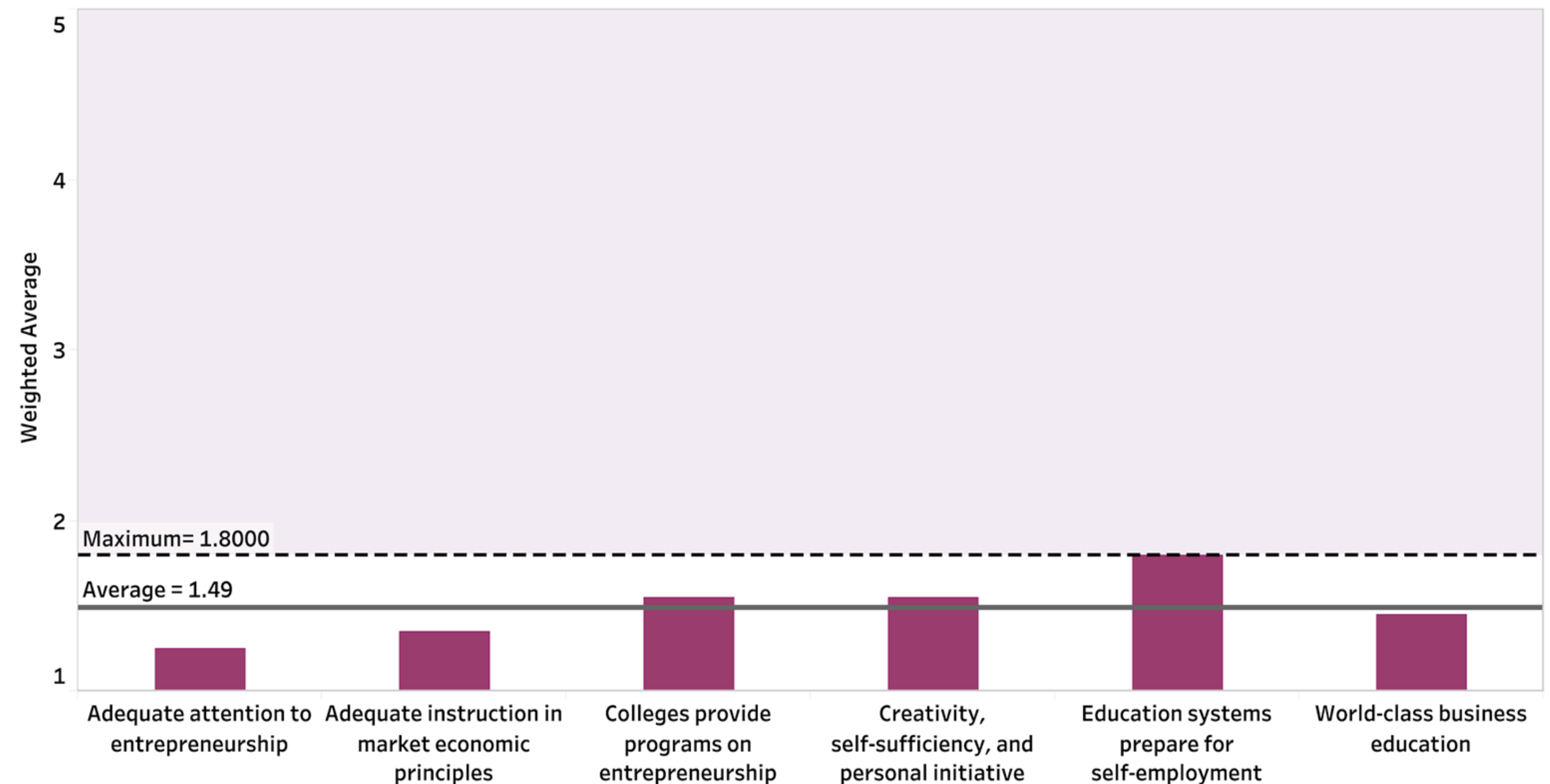
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Education and Training

This framework examines the level of entrepreneurship education and training that public and private learning institutes provide in the nation. There is no specific area in education Iraq is low in, but it is a problem with the educational system in general

The items of the framework are:

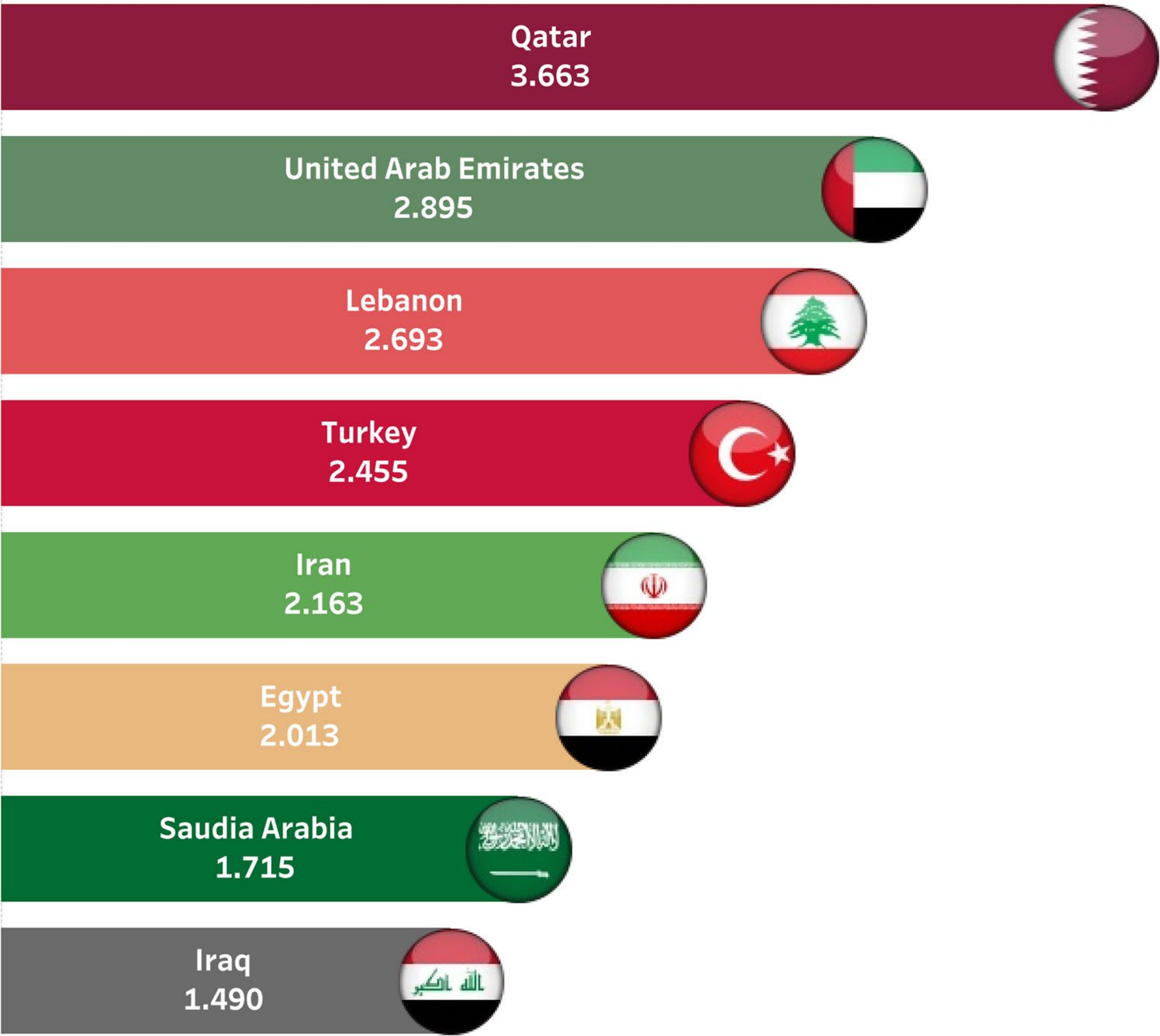
- 1) Teaching in primary and secondary education provides adequate attention to entrepreneurship and new firm creation
- 2) Teaching in primary and secondary education provides adequate instruction in market economic principles
- 3) Colleges and universities have enough courses and programs on entrepreneurship
- 4) Teaching in primary and secondary education encourages creativity, self-sufficiency, and personal initiative
- 5) The vocational, professional, and continuing education systems provide good preparation for self-employment
- 6) The level of business and management education is truly world-class



Education and Training

Entrepreneurship is not a topic that the educational system in Iraq focuses on. Even though many initiatives have been working on spreading awareness on entrepreneurship for youth and college students, more students all over Iraq need to be exposed for such knowledge and trainings, pushing towards solving real-life problems through entrepreneurial approach based on the academic basis the students have.

Primary and Secondary education systems should involve classes where students are encouraged to think outside the box and have an opportunity to discuss, learn and engage in extra-curricular activities to improve their entrepreneurial skills. College students should be exposed to a comprehensive understanding of the market, real-life challenges and opportunities to find solutions to any issue encountered with more practical than theoretical content to maximize the chances for future innovation.



Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

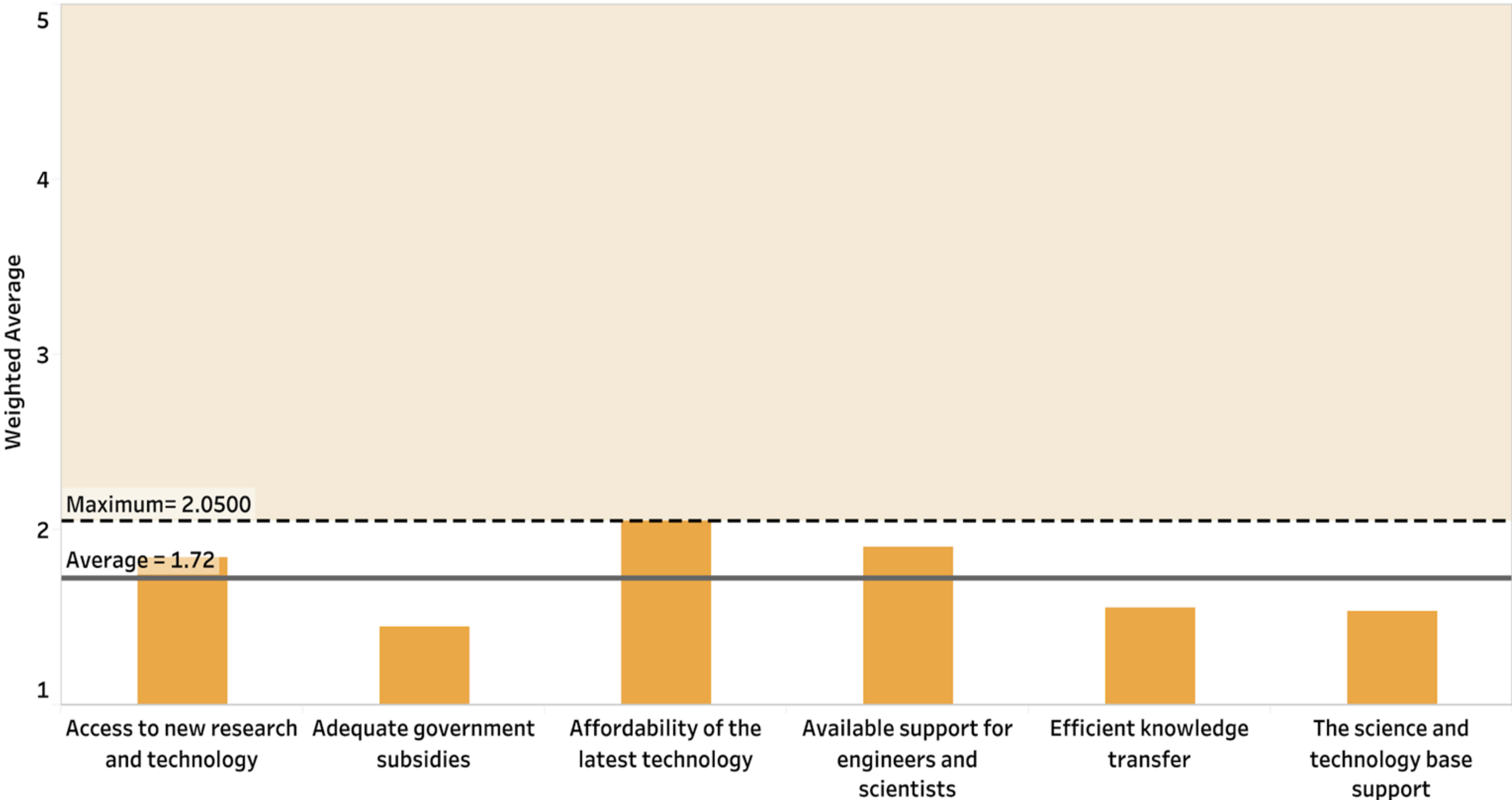


Research and Development Transfer

This framework examines the ease at which new technological, science and other knowledge advancements can be accessed and translated into new business ventures. Interestingly, the experts somewhat agreed that firms can afford the latest technologies. Local experts also have some concerns if technologies are readily available and efficiently transferred to new and growing firms

The items of the framework are:

- 1) New and growing firms have just much access to new research and technology as large, established firms
- 2) There are adequate government subsidies for new and growing firms to acquire new technology
- 3) New and growing firms can afford the latest technology
- 4) There is good support available for engineers and scientists to have their ideas commercialized through new and growing firms
- 5) New technology, science and other knowledge are efficiently transferred from universities and public research centers to new and growing firms
- 6) The science and technology basis efficiently supports the creation of world-class new technology-based ventures in at least one area



Research and Development Transfer

Research and development transfer to businesses is the essence of startups that aim at solving common problems of a country with innovative solutions.

Even though new firms are able to afford new technologies, difficulty of developing such technologies in Iraq might be linked to the deficient knowledge base or infrastructure.

Lack of efficient knowledge transfer from universities urges the need to develop new curriculum for universities that involves a focus on entrepreneurship skills and activates the connect between startups and universities' labs and research units through incubators and other entrepreneurship-centered programs.



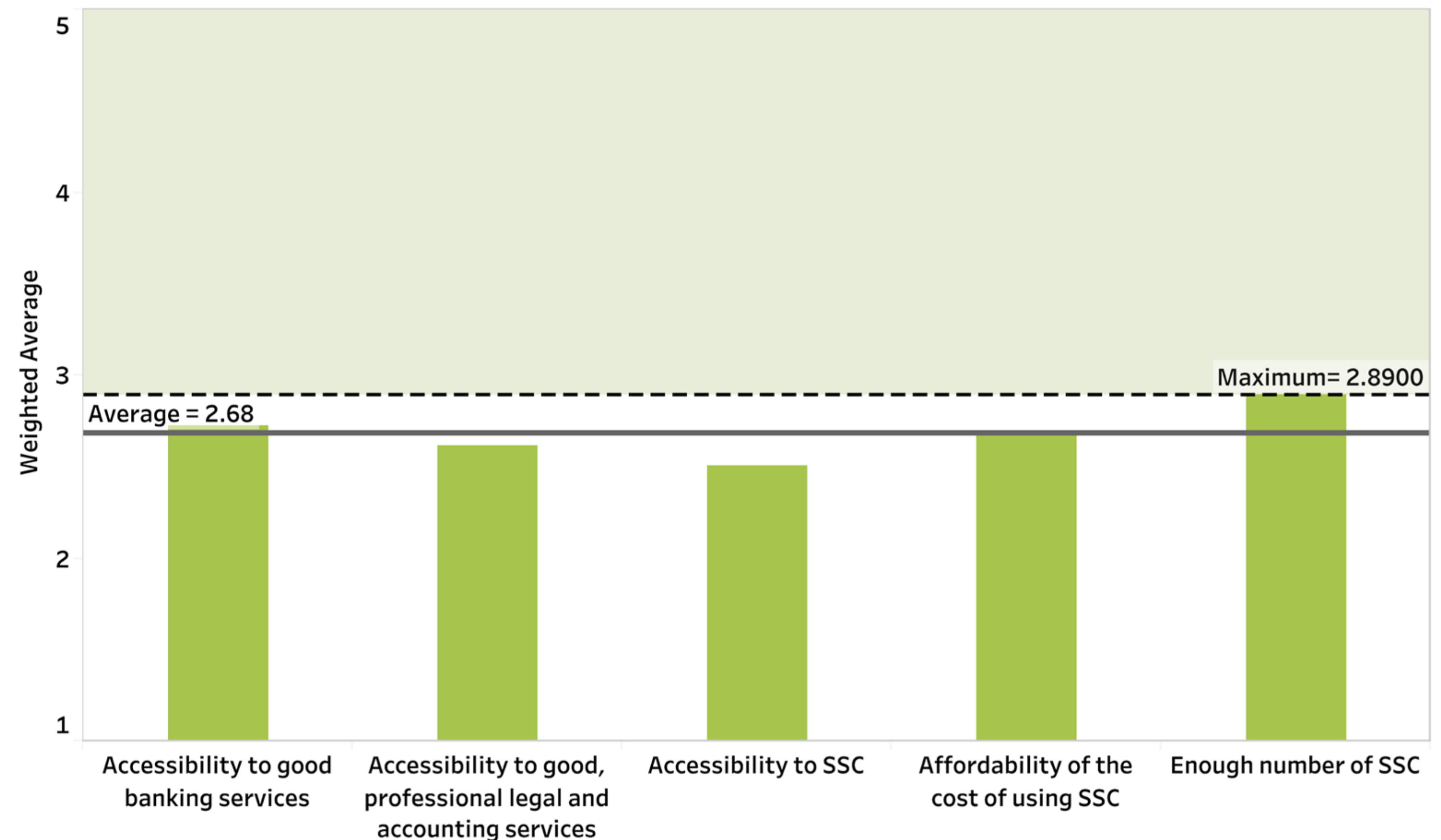
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Commercial and Professional Infrastructure

This framework examines the availability, affordability, and accessibility of commercial and professional services for new and growing firms. Examples of factors examined include the sufficiency and cost of subcontractors, suppliers and consultants. The availability, affordability and accessibility of commercial and professional services for new businesses is apparently an area of concern

The items of the framework are:

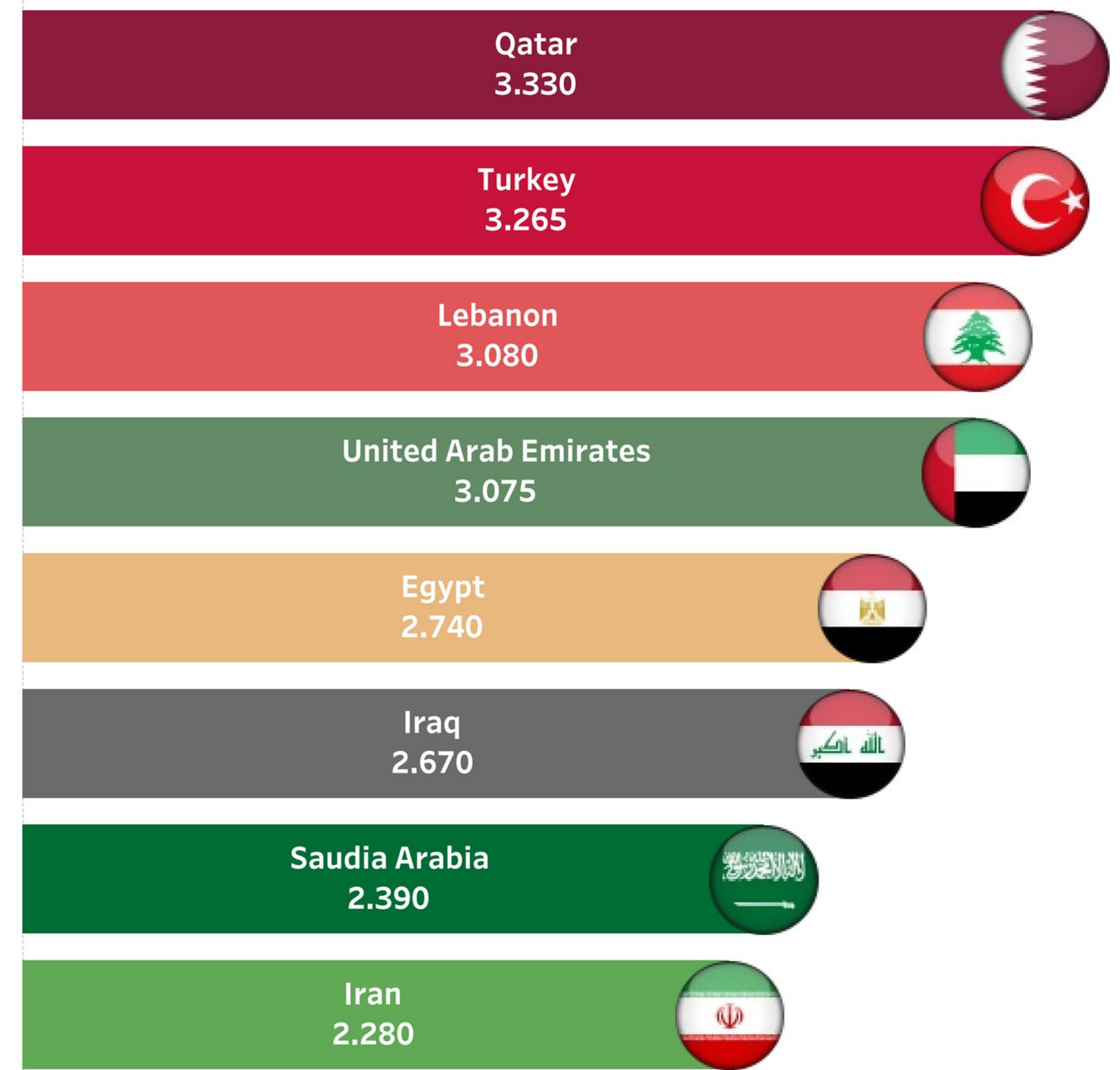
- 1) It is easy for new and growing firms to get good banking services (checking accounts, foreign exchange transactions, letters of credit, and the like)
- 2) It is easy for new and growing firms to get good, professional legal and accounting services
- 3) It is easy for new and growing firms to get good subcontractors, suppliers and consultants (SSC)
- 4) New and growing firms can afford the cost of using subcontractors, suppliers and consultants (SSC)
- 5) There are enough subcontractors, suppliers, and consultants (SSC) to support new and growing firms



Commercial and Professional Infrastructure

In order to support and grow firms, there should be a well-established commercial infrastructure in which there are sufficient, competent and qualified subcontractors and suppliers working at costs made affordable to new start-ups, so they can eventually expand and practice their economic activities freely.

Based on experts evaluation, this framework is one of the most developed entrepreneurial frameworks in Iraq. Thus, the availability of consultancy, banking and other needed services can be a starting point on which gaps in other frameworks can be filled by further development of this framework.



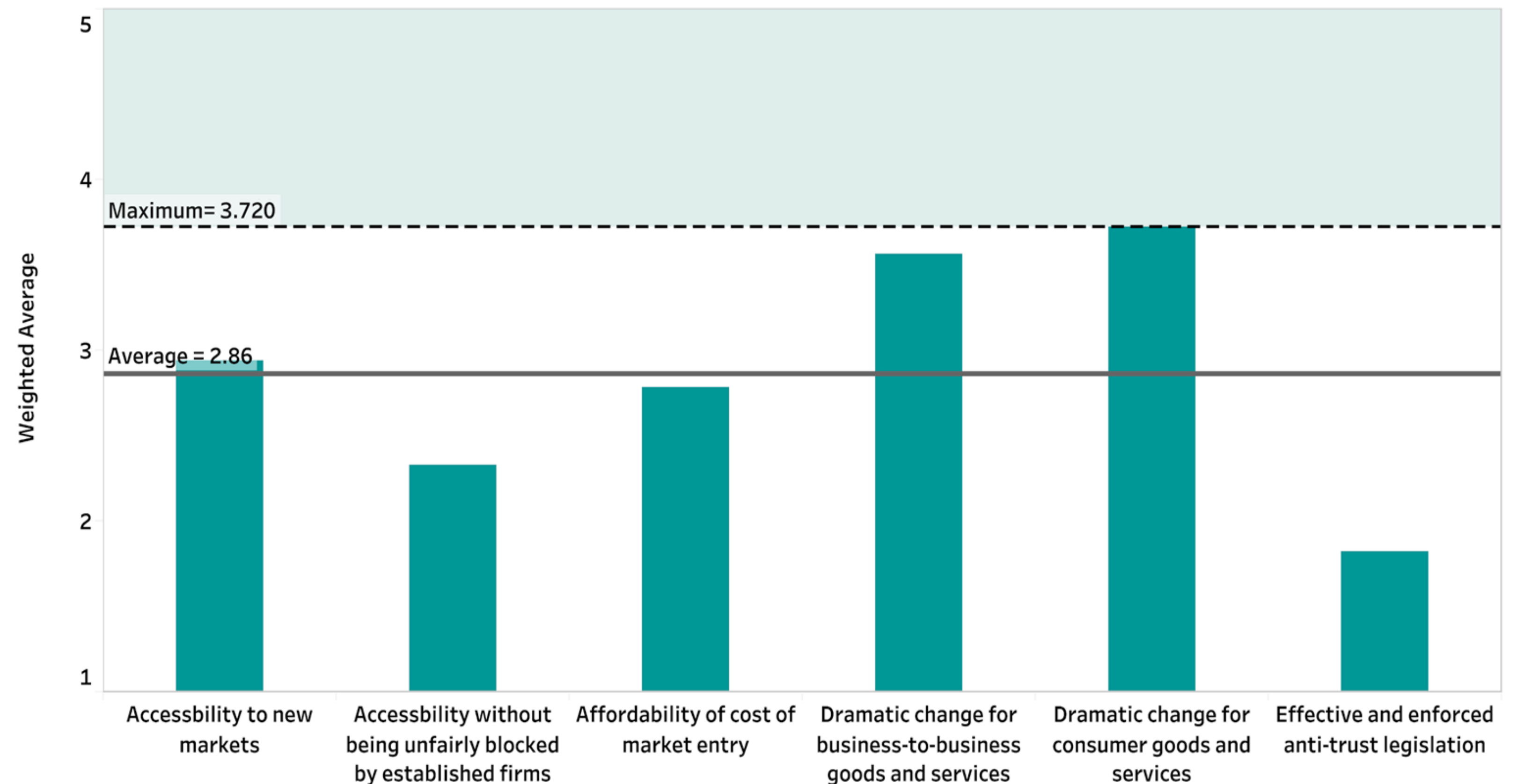
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Market Openness

This framework examines how open the local markets are to new goods and services as well as the level to which established businesses (via existing policy and otherwise) are able to limit competition from new businesses. Iraq's experts rating scores on market openness were better than the previous framework.

The items of the framework are:

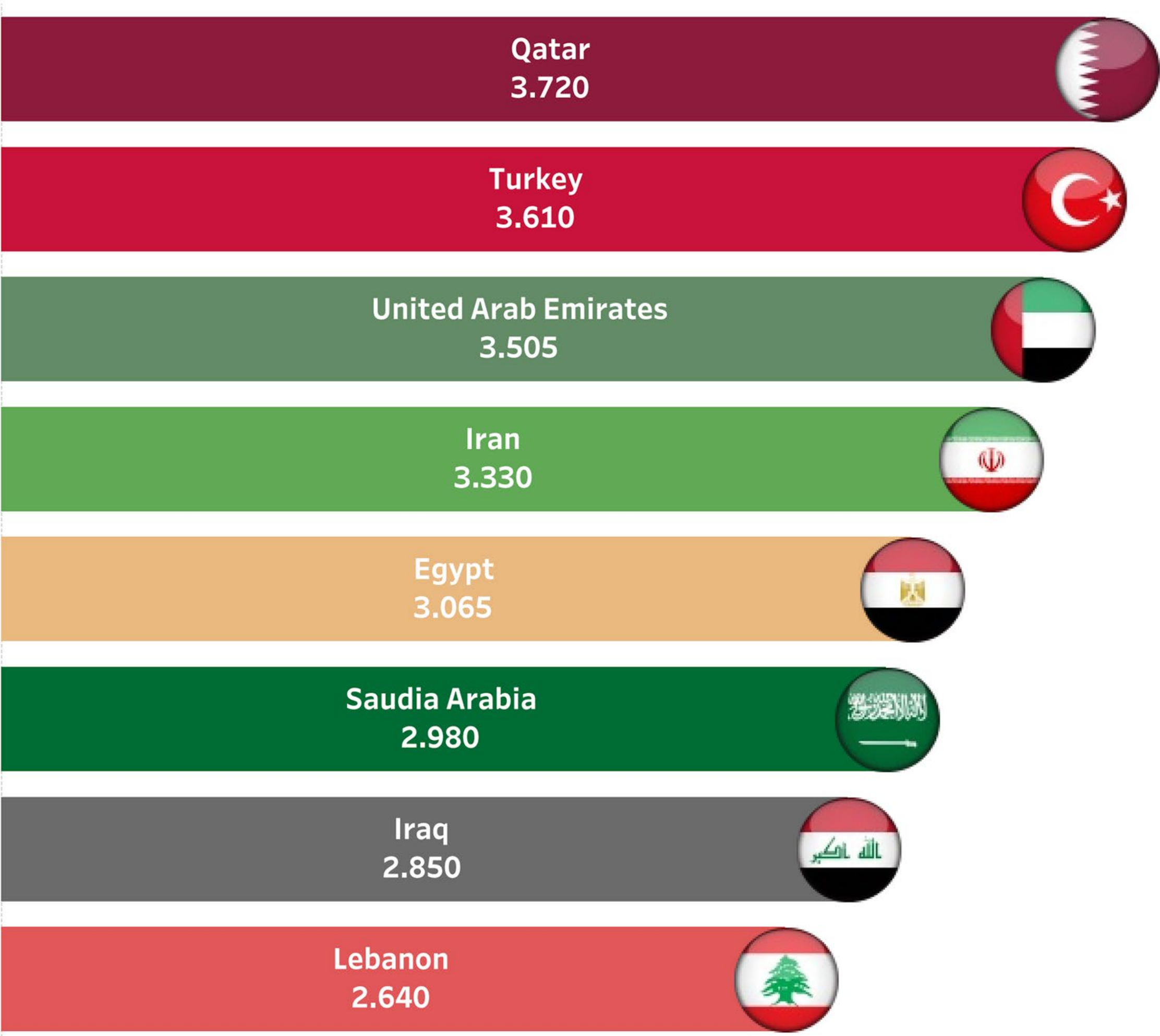
- 1) New and growing firms can easily enter new markets
- 2) New and growing firms can enter markets without being unfairly blocked by established firms
- 3) The new and growing firms can afford the cost of market entry
- 4) The market for consumer goods and services change dramatically from year to year
- 5) The markets for business-to-business goods and services change dramatically from year to year
- 6) The anti-trust legislation is effective and well enforced



Market Openness

Even though Iraq score is low compared to other MENA counties. Market openness is one of the more developed framework compared to others in Iraq. The better evaluation for this framework is attributed to the dramatic changes in B2B and B2C market that take palce year to year. As the market is developing and continuously changing, it is generating the opportunity for new firms to form and provide solutions.

However, ineffective anti-trust legislation is halting the openness of the Iraqi market. Law enforcement is vital for firms to develop in a healthy environment and would even help with moderating the effect of established firms on newly formed firms. Hence, law enforcement is much needed for Iraqi market to encourage new firms to form.



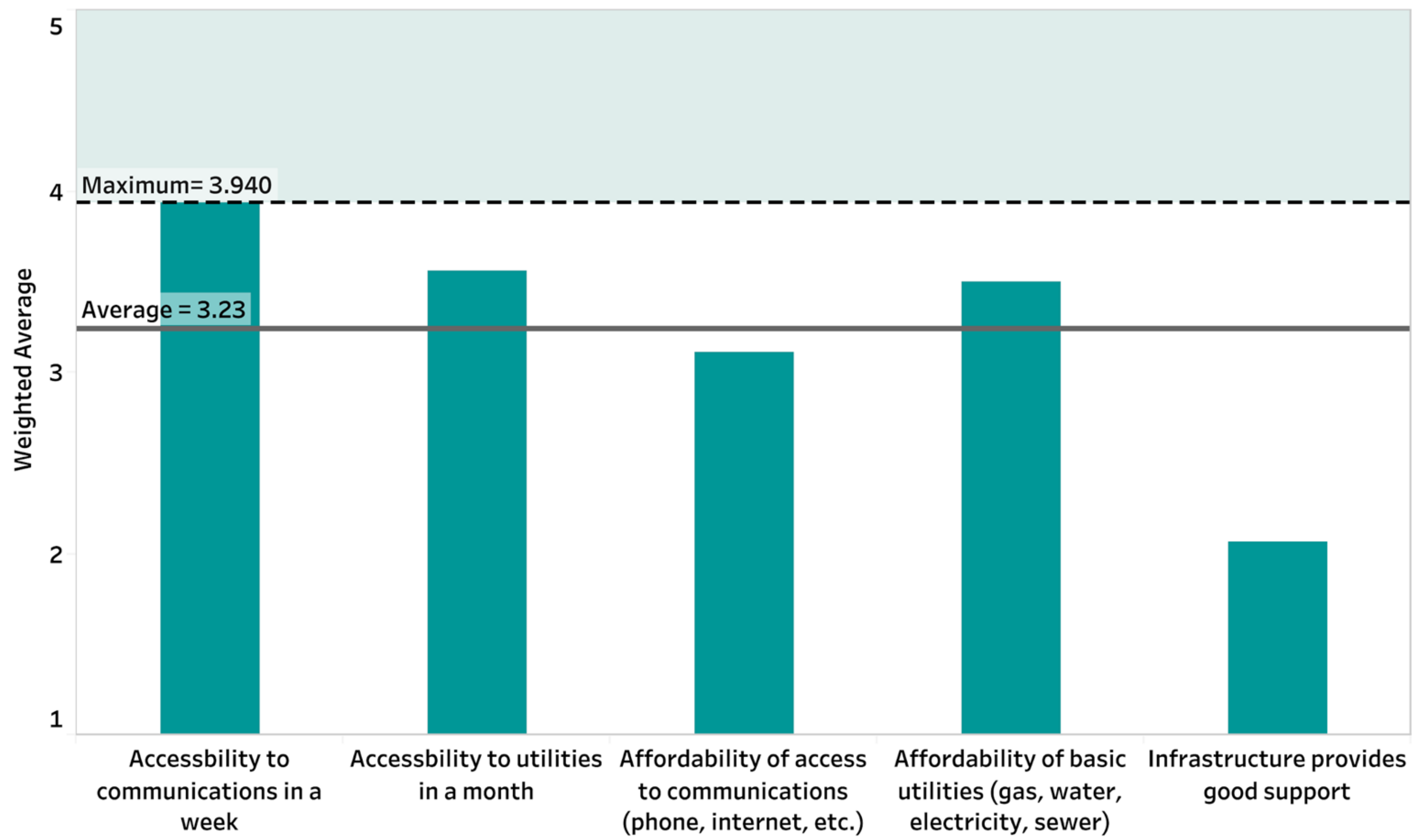
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020 <https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Access to Physical Infrastructure

This framework examines the access and quality new firms have to the existing physical infrastructure within a country. Examples of factors examined include access to physical infrastructure such as roads and utilities as well as their cost. Iraq scores were considerably higher than the average across all frameworks.

The items of the framework are:

- 1) A new and growing firm can get good access to communications in about a week
- 2) New and growing firms can get good access to utilities (gas, water, electricity, sewage) in about a month
- 3) It is not too expensive for a new and growing firm to get good access to communications (phone, internet, etc.)
- 4) New and growing firms can afford the cost of basic utilities (gas, water, electricity, sewage)
- 5) The physical infrastructure (roads, utilities, communications, waste disposal) provides good support for new and growing firms

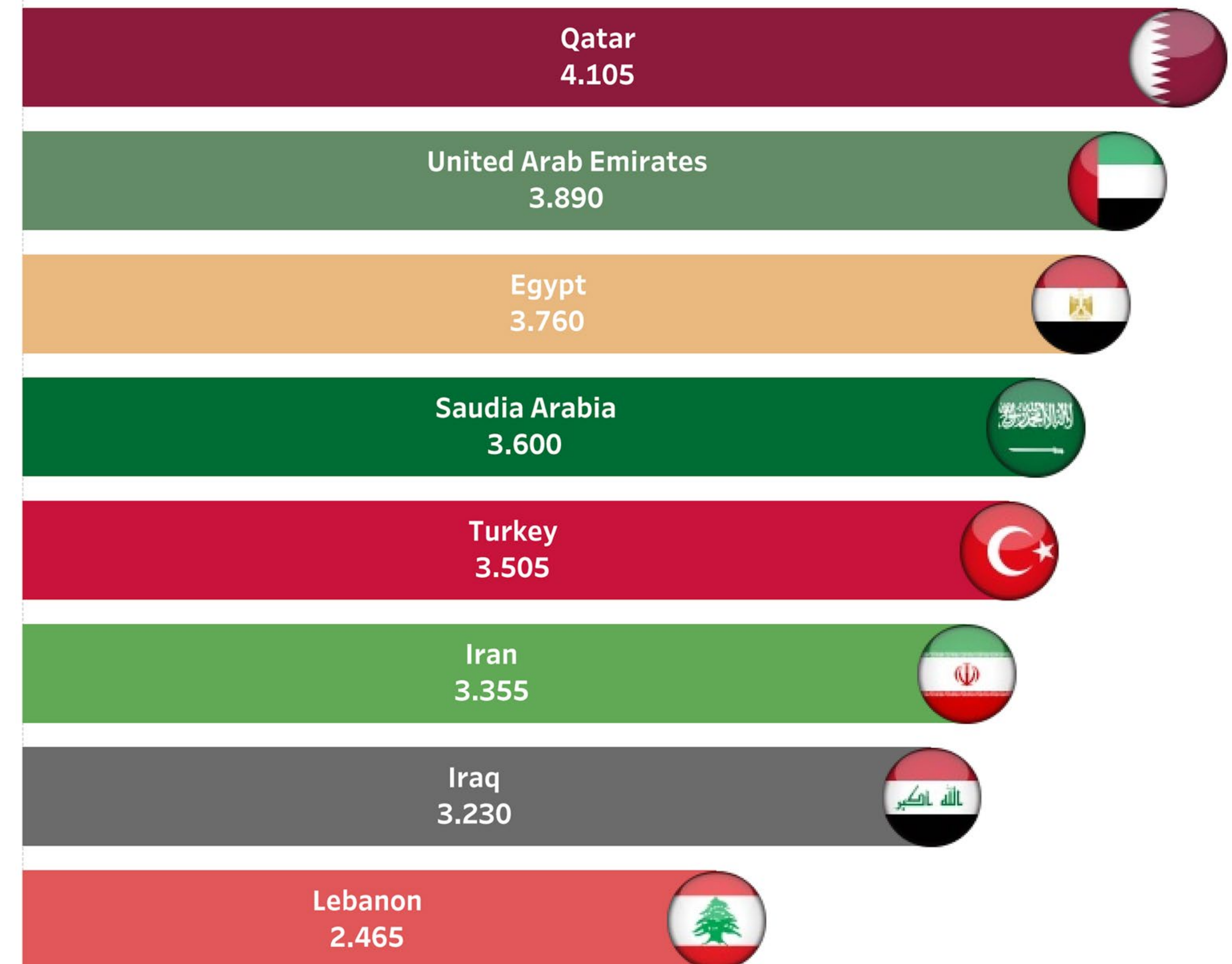


Access to Physical Infrastructure

Access to physical infrastructure is essential for any business to operate. The higher score relative to other entrepreneurial frameworks in Iraq is mostly attributed to the accessibility to communication and basic utilities. However, in comparison to other MENA countries, Iraq needs more development in its infrastructure to compete.

New ventures, especially those that are tech-related, are dependent on the existence of good infrastructure. For example, The continuous internet cut during exams or protests severely hit such ventures.

Developing the infrastructure, and providing access to facilities for startups and SMEs are essential to develop a growing private sector



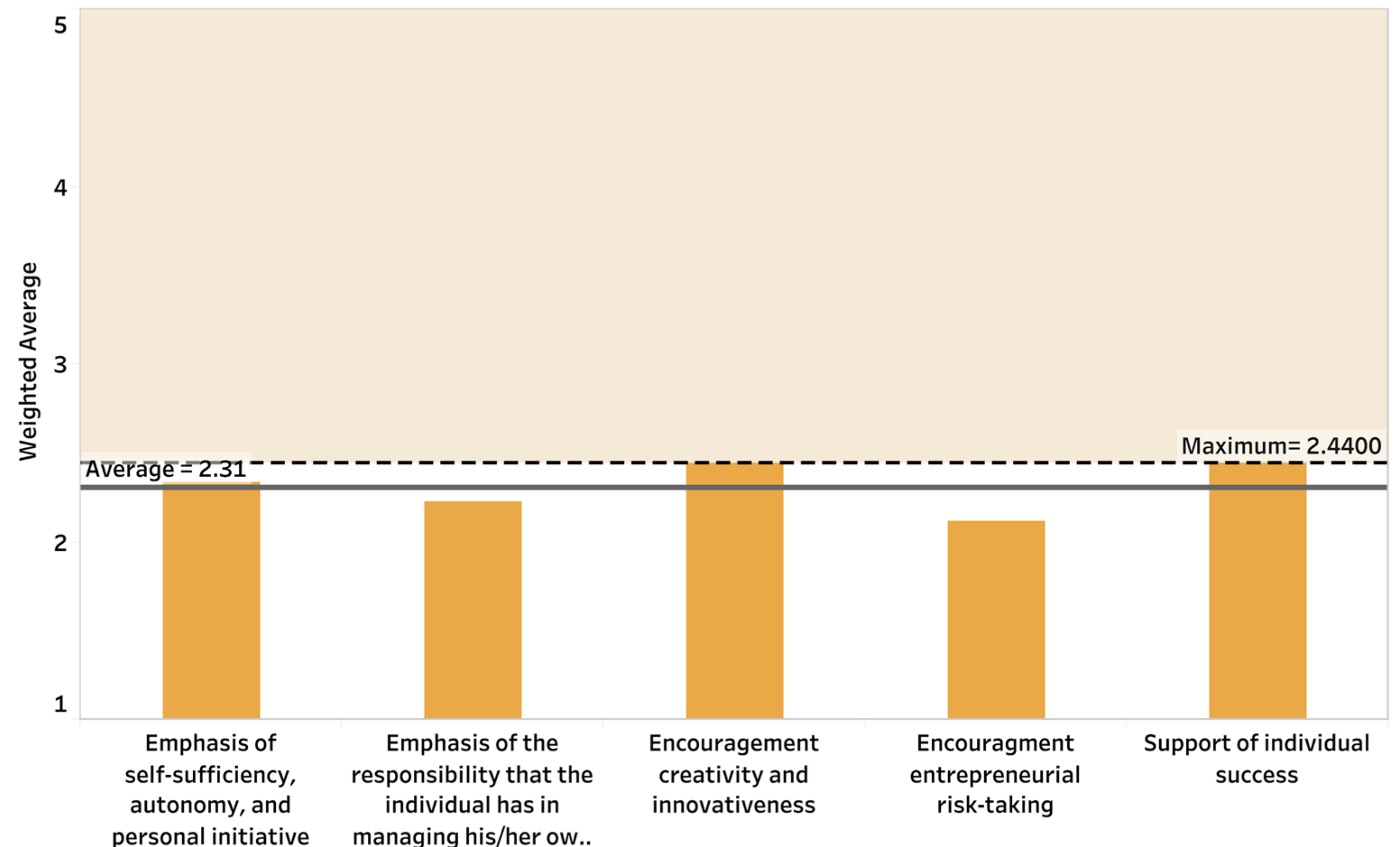
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020
<https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Cultural and Social Norms

This framework examines the sociocultural factors within a country. Examples of factors examined encompass a wide range of socio-cultural factors including individualism, creativity and cultural appetite for entrepreneurial risk. Experts ranked 'culture **encouraging** risk-taking' as the lowest item

The items of the framework are:

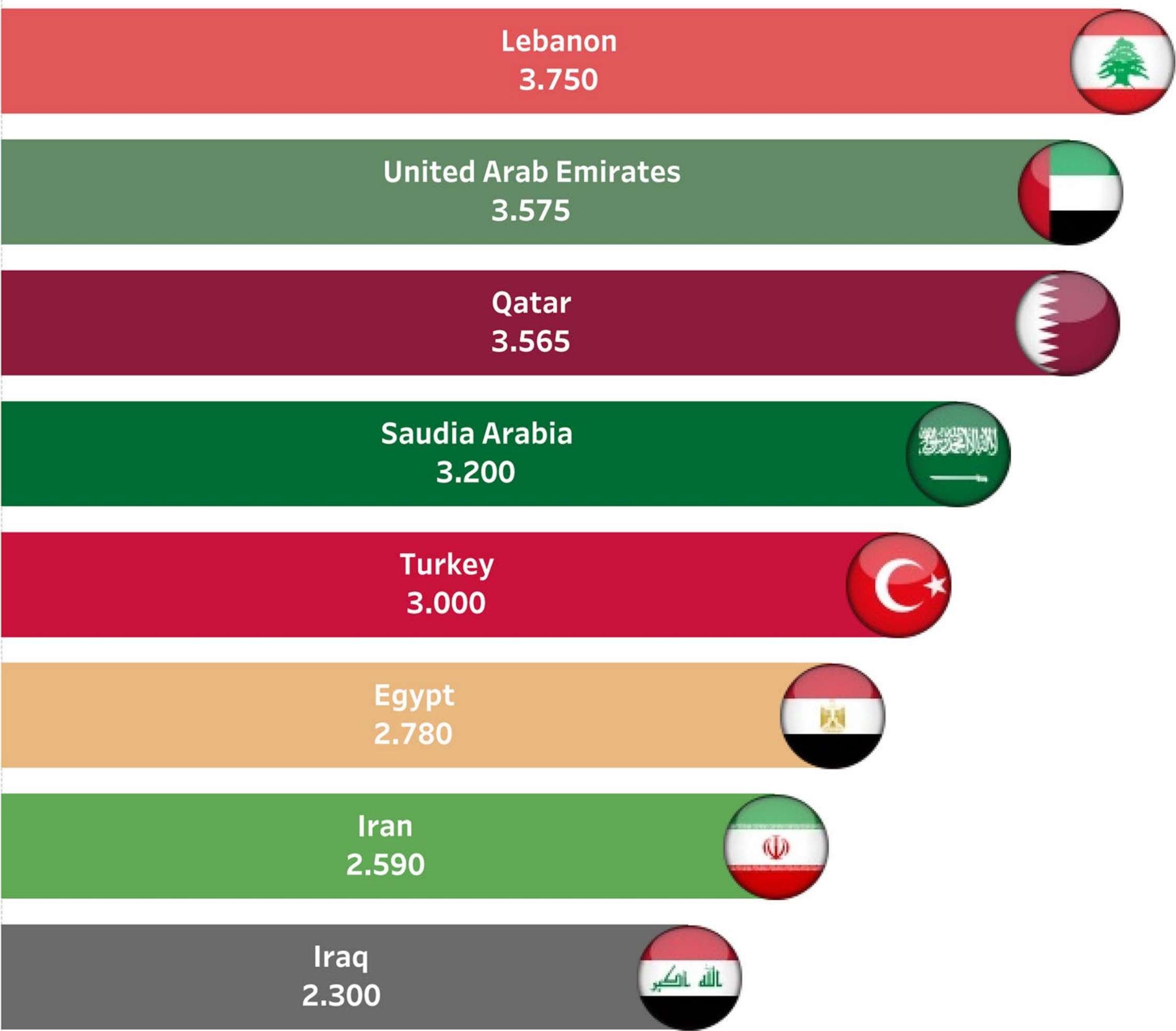
- 1) The national culture emphasizes self-sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative
- 2) The national culture emphasizes the responsibility that the individual (rather than the collective) has in managing his or her own life
- 3) The national culture encourages creativity and innovativeness
- 4) The national culture encourages entrepreneurial risk-taking
- 5) The national culture is highly supportive of individual success achieved through own personal efforts



Cultural and Social Norms

Entrepreneurship is highly influenced by the social and cultural values, beliefs and norms of the country. The support entrepreneurs need in order to take risks in the market varies according to the atmosphere surrounding them. Unfortunately, Iraq has also scored the lowest among other countries in the region.

Youth need to be encouraged to take risks, and work in the private sector instead of the public sector. Awareness towards entrepreneurship is much needed whether by integrating it with the education system to encourage the youth to become self-sufficient or by providing governmental and non-governmental programs to emphasize autonomy and personal initiatives.



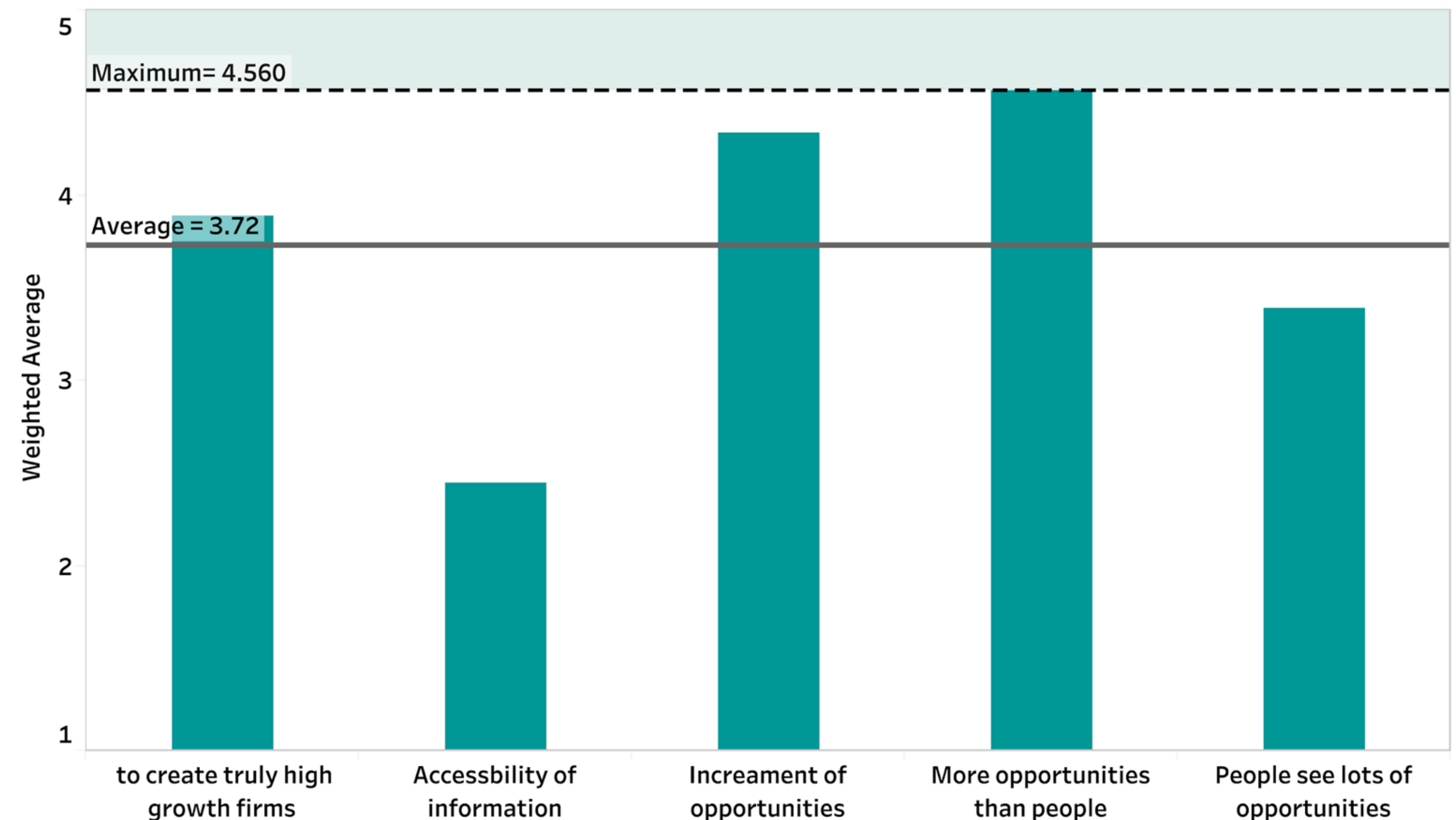
Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2018/2019 Global Report, 2020 <https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50443> [Accessed 4 June 2020].

Entrepreneurial opportunities

This framework examines the presence of entrepreneurial opportunities in the country. Examples of conditions examined include creation opportunities, presence of human resources, changes in the past years and the presence of information to assess opportunities. The scores of this framework were better than the previous frameworks.

The items of the framework are:

- 1) There are plenty of good opportunities to create truly high growth firms
- 2) It is easy to get the information required to assess business opportunities
- 3) Good opportunities for new firms have considerably increased in the past five years
- 4) There are more good opportunities for the creation of new firms than there are people able to take advantage of them
- 5) People see lots of good opportunities for the creation of new firms

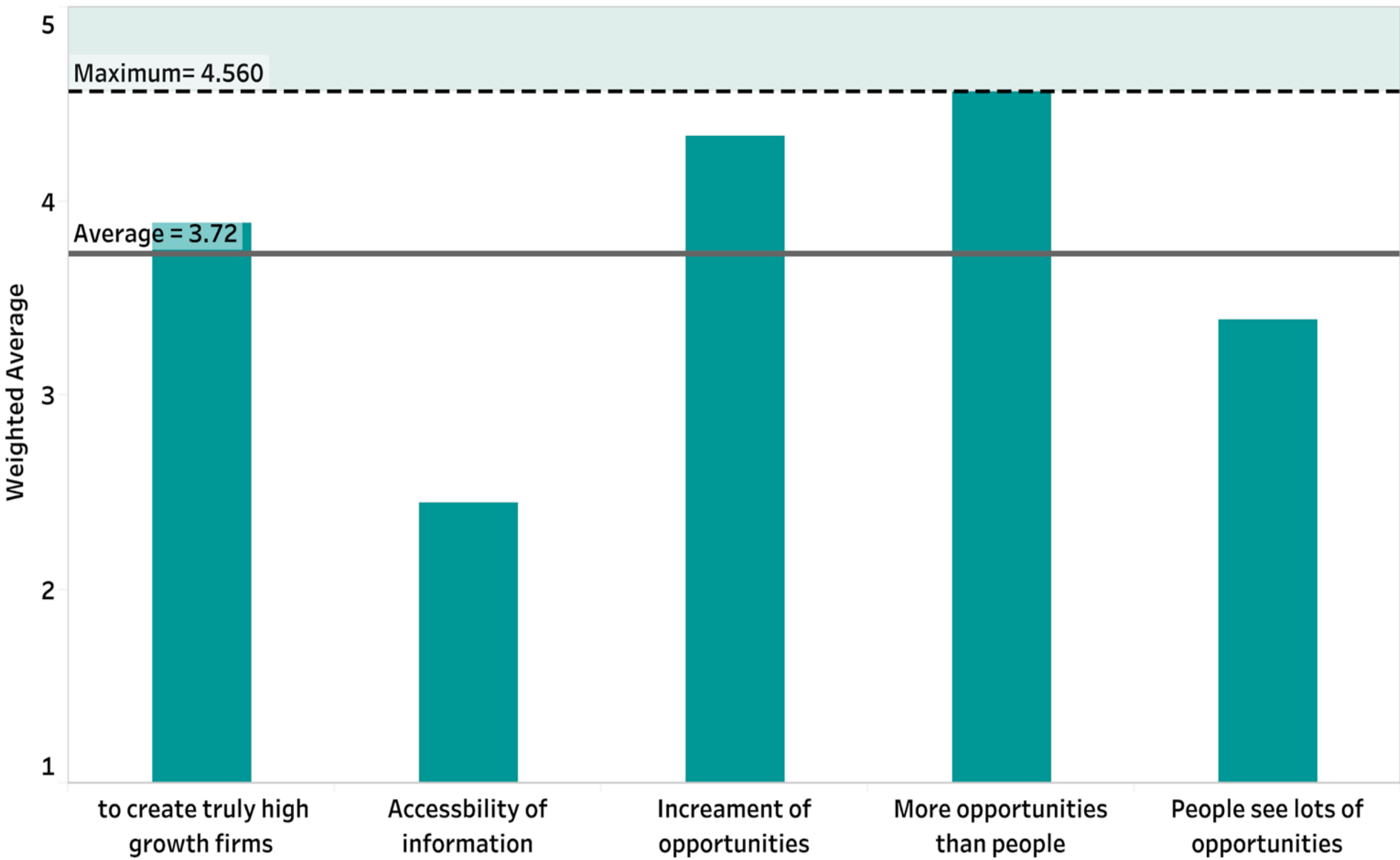


Entrepreneurial opportunities

Opportunity-driven start-ups make a great number among the overall entrepreneurial initiatives in Iraq, as this framework scored one of the highest in this study. Iraq has been through devastating circumstances which all hindered sufficient investments in the past. Today, there is an increased demand to invest in many opportunities and potentially establish high-growth firms.

Nevertheless, entrepreneurs still find it difficult to decide where to take the risk and which aspect is really in need regarding the market. Also, there are no means to assess opportunities which is probably due to insufficient research in the country and lack of available data to start with emphasizing the important role of research centers.

Noticeably, local experts agreed that there are more good opportunities than there are people taking advantage of them. This may be related to the educational framework and its importance in introducing more individuals to the entrepreneurship field.



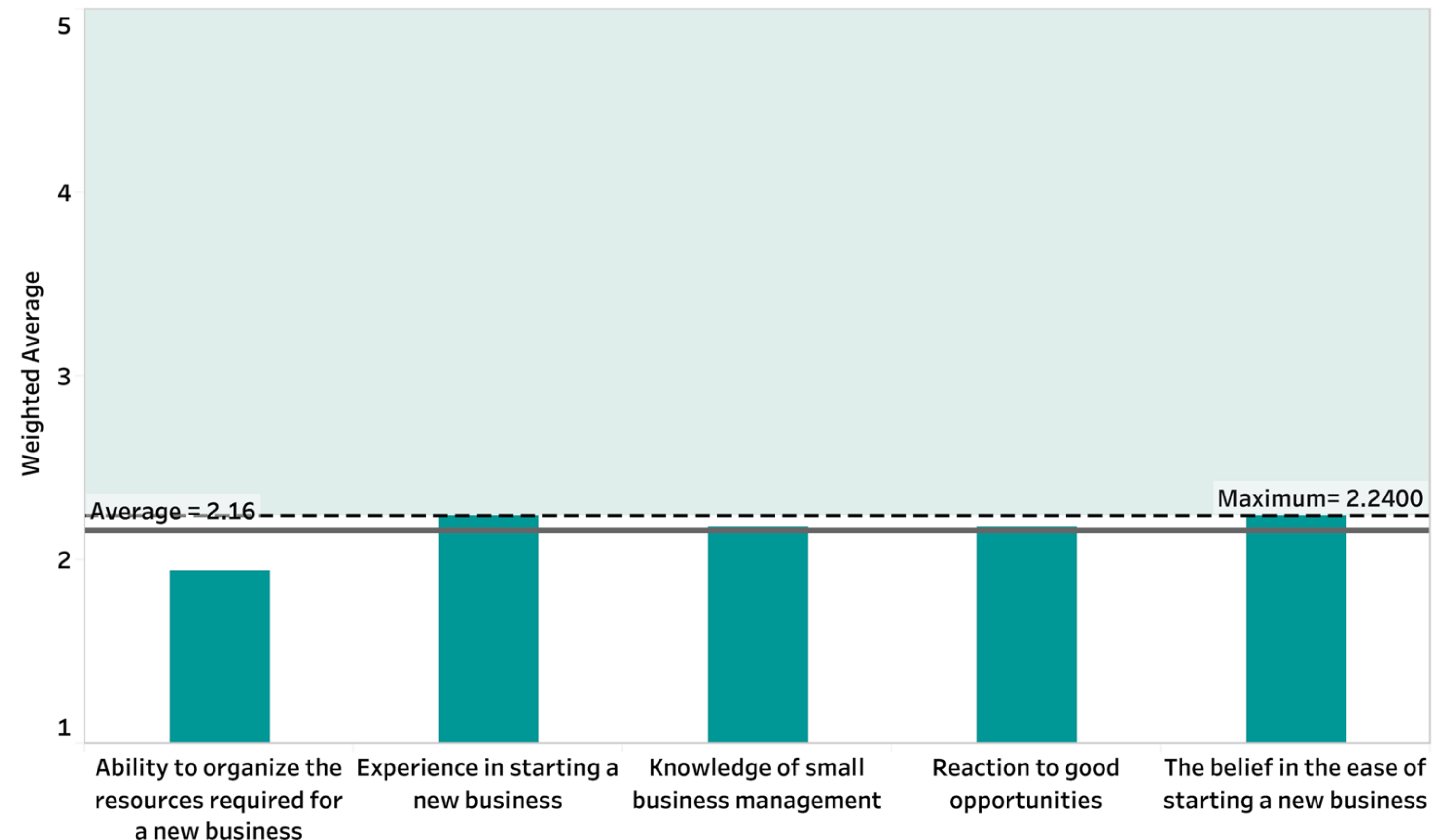
* No available data on other MENA countries

Skills and Capacity in General Population

This framework examines the availability of skills and capacity to implement new firms in the general population. Examples include the ease of creating a new business, the ability to manage it, the experience needed and how the market responds. The ratings of our local experts in this framework are low. Noticeably, they rated the ability to organize the resources required for a new business as very low

The items of the framework are:

- 1) Many people have the ability to organize the resources required for a new business
- 2) Many people have experience in starting a new business
- 3) Many people know how to manage a small business
- 4) Many people can react quickly to good opportunities for a new business
- 5) Most people believe that creating new or high growth businesses is easy

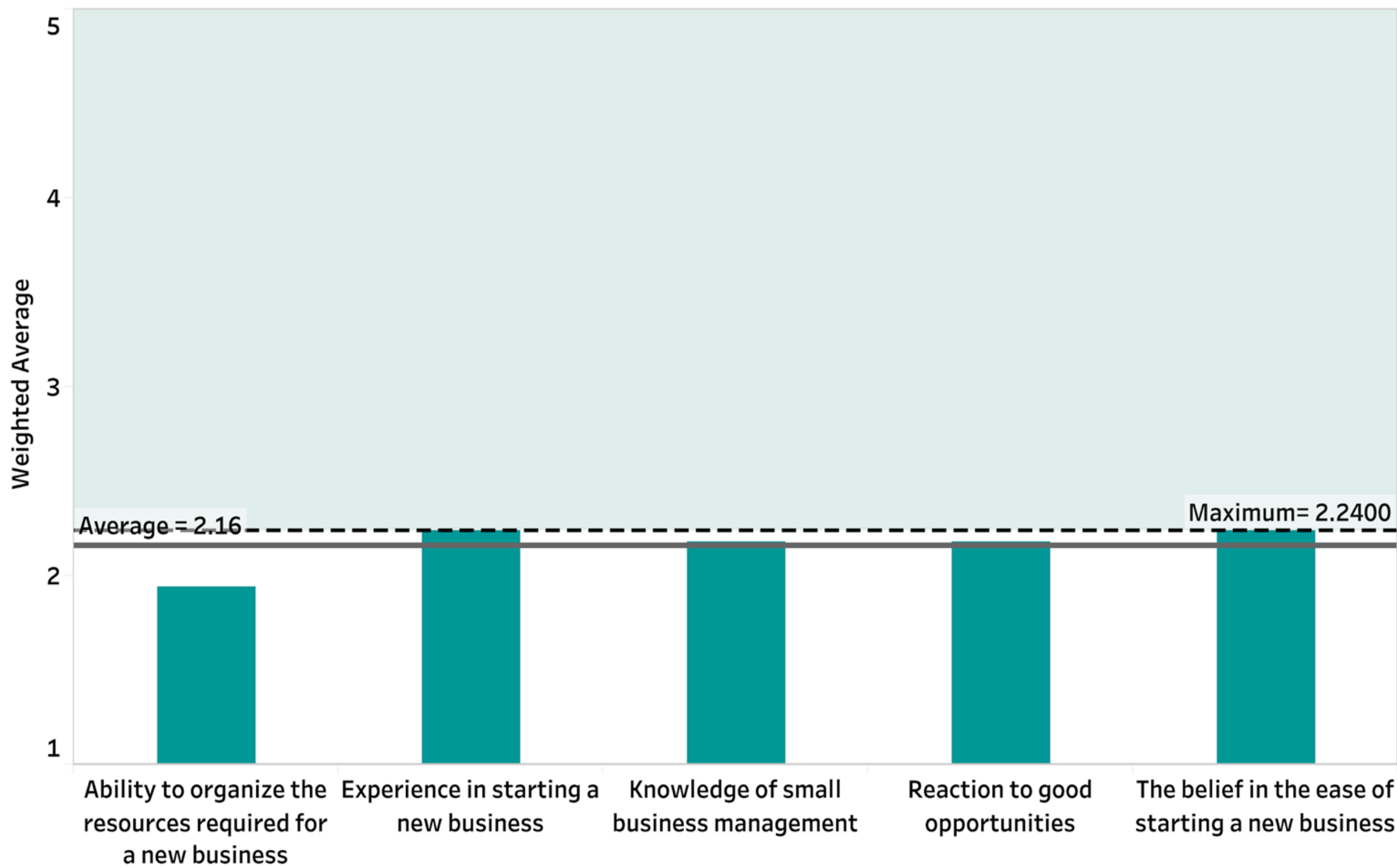


Skills and Capacity in General Population

The low scores are observed in this framework can be linked to the low scores for the educational and R&D frameworks. Even the lack of governmental programs to support entrepreneurship contribute to the lack of sufficient skills and capacities in the population.

As we discussed earlier, development programs for youth, especially undergraduates, are much needed. Also, measures must be taken to assure the resources needed to starting a business are easy to access.

Local organizations and companies supported by local and international agencies are working on filling the gap by offering free or discounted training programs for youth. However, due to limited resources, these programs can not be available for all those who need it. Expanding these programs to involve communities and regions beyond the current entrepreneurship-oriented community is a must.



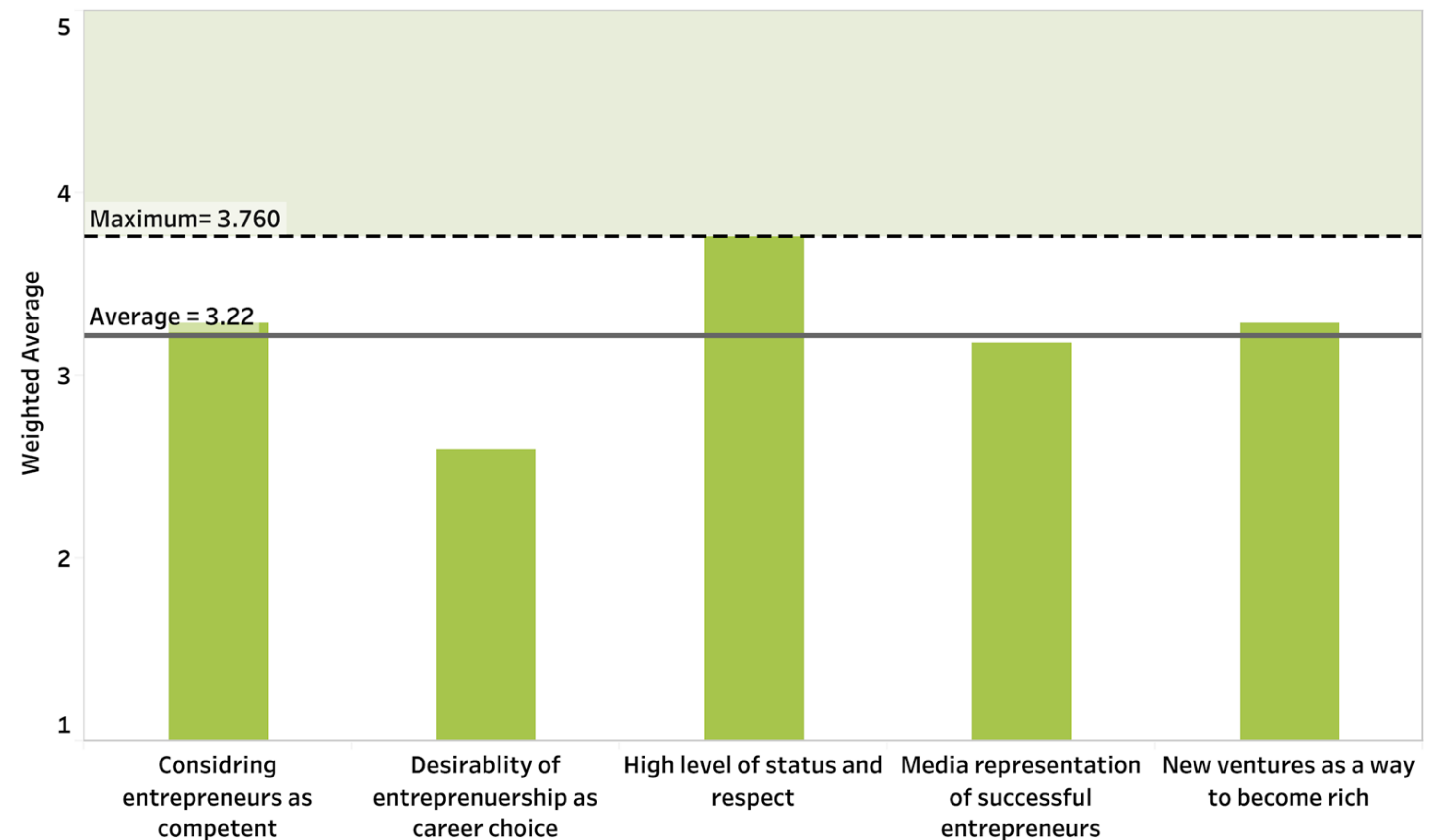
* No available data on other MENA countries

Motivations

This framework examines the presence of motivations to create new firms in the general population. Examples include becoming rich as a motivation, choosing entrepreneurship as a career, respect, achieving high-level status, stories of successful entrepreneurs and the like. The score of this framework is among the highest of the frameworks. However, there is room for improvement

The items of the framework are:

- 1) Most people think of entrepreneurs as competent, resourceful individuals
- 2) Most people consider becoming an entrepreneur as a desirable career choice
- 3) Successful entrepreneurs have a high level of status and respect
- 4) You will often see stories in the public media about successful entrepreneurs
- 5) The creation of new ventures is considered an appropriate way to become rich

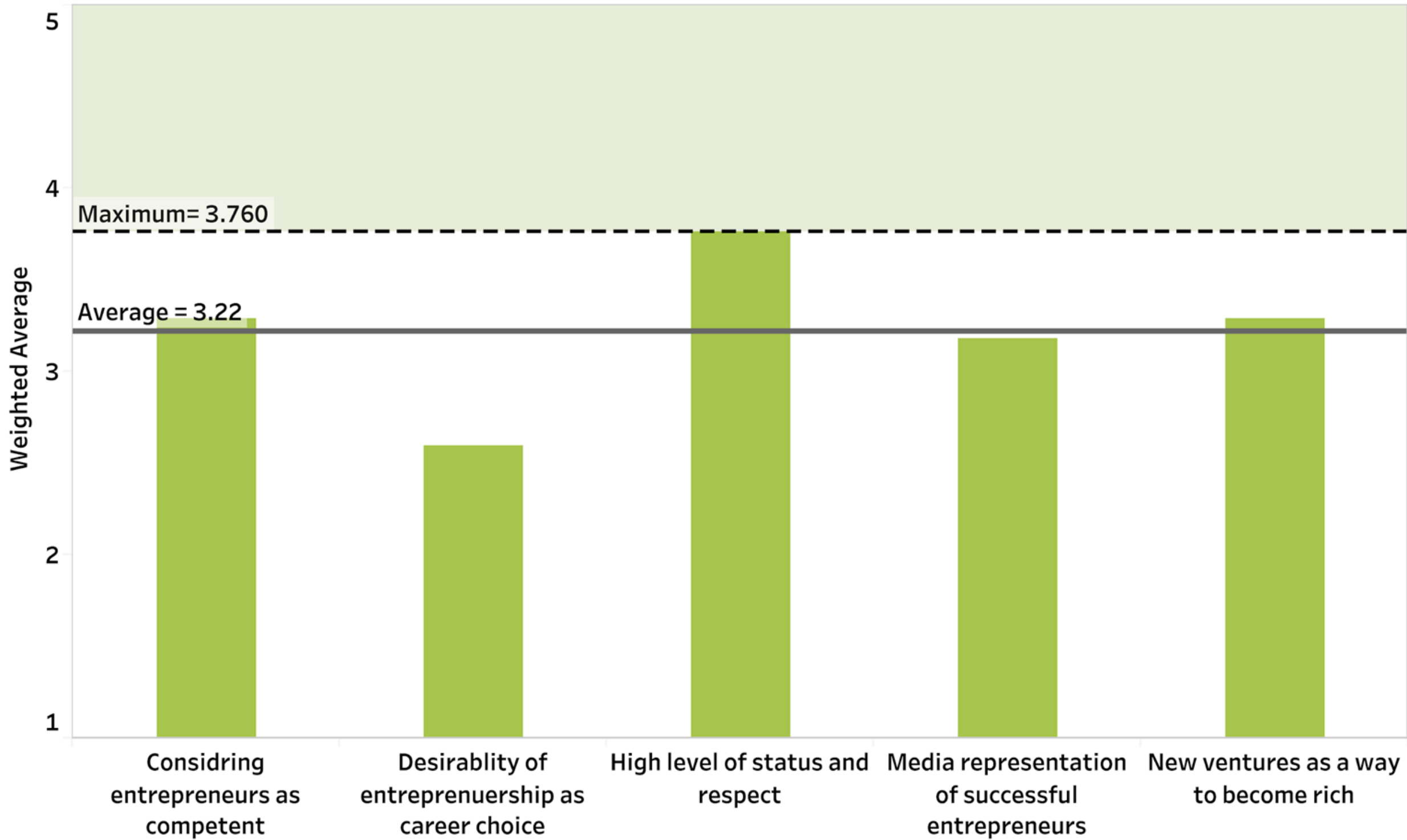


Motivations

How people or society think about entrepreneurship is very essential to determine the approach they will take towards establishing a new business.

Even if the social norms in Iraq are not the favorable set for having entrepreneurial community, motives towards being an entrepreneur is high as being an entrepreneur gives a better image in the community and it is considered a great achievement to be a successful entrepreneur.

Enhancing the motives through the media and establishing a common belief among the youth about the need for entrepreneurship will make the youth able to take advantage of good opportunities for the creation of new firms that not enough people are able to take advantage of.



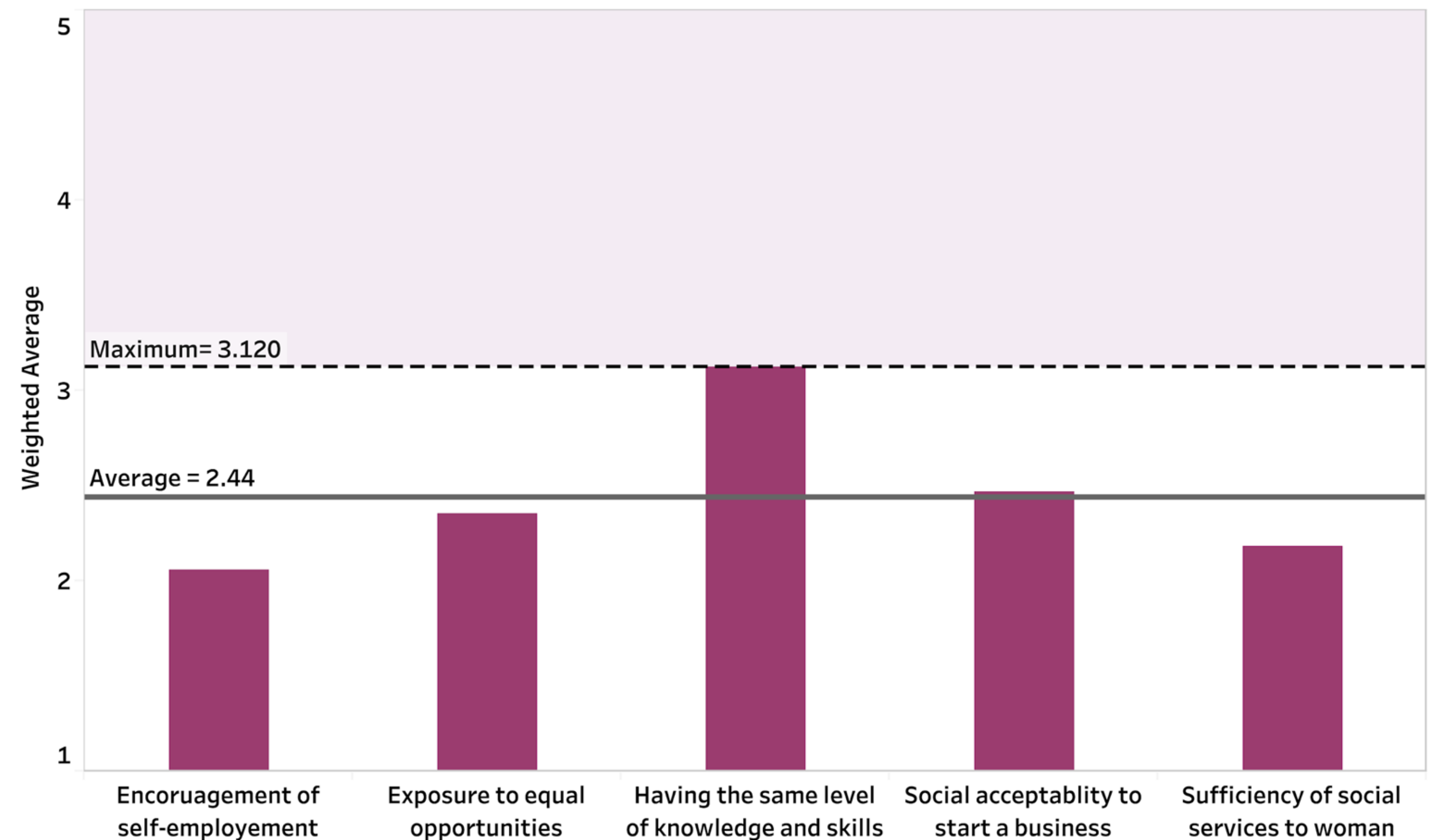
* No available data on other MENA countries

Women and Entrepreneurship

This framework examines the support for the participation of women in entrepreneurial initiatives. The score in this framework is low as in the other frameworks despite the changes occurring in the ecosystem and the increasing number of women getting into entrepreneurship

The items of the framework are:

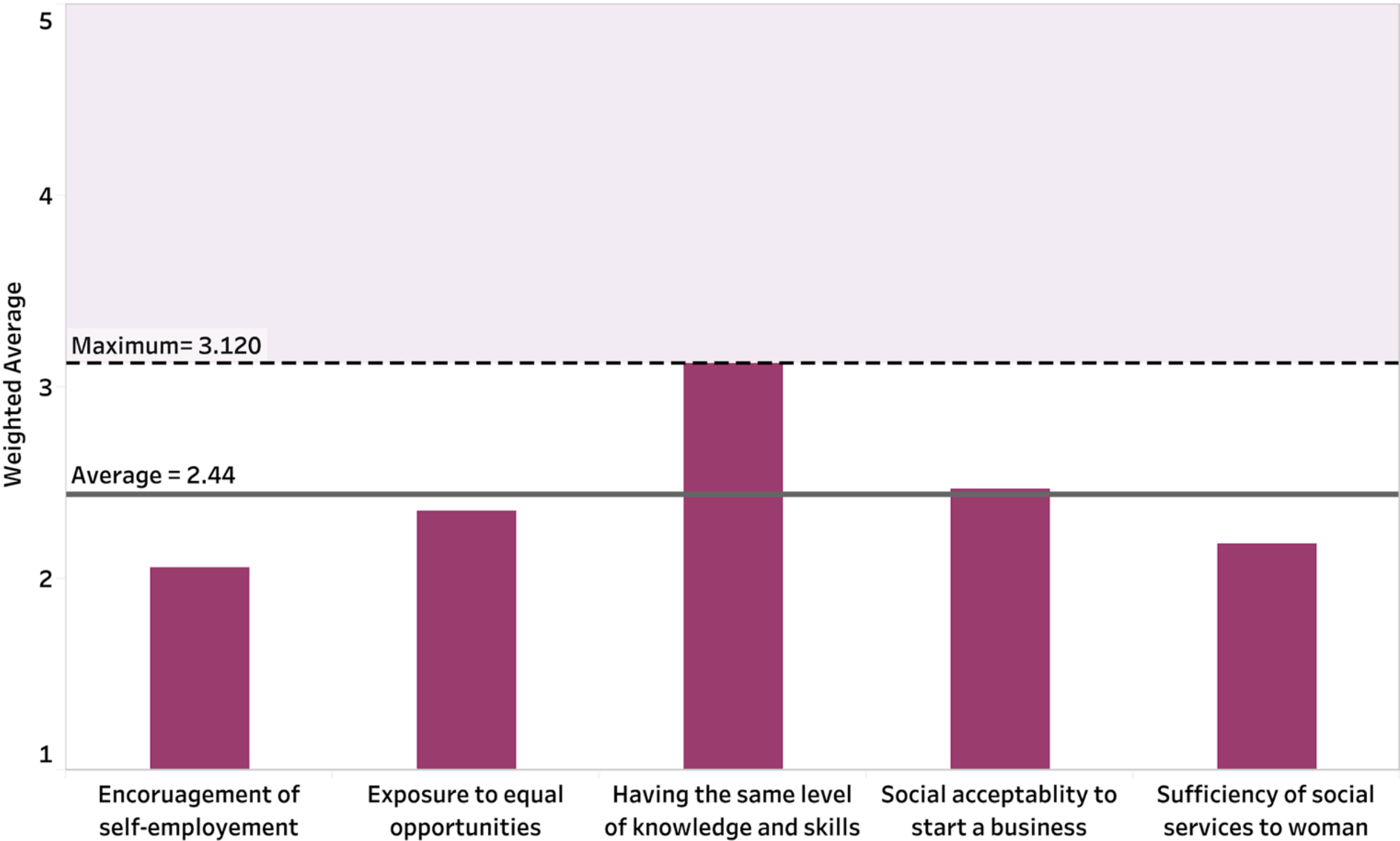
- 1) Women are encouraged to become self-employed or start a new business
- 2) Women get exposed to as many good opportunities as men to start a new business
- 3) Women have the same level of knowledge and skills as men to start a new business
- 4) Starting a new business is a socially acceptable career option for women
- 5) There are sufficient social services available so that women can continue to work even after they start a family



Women and Entrepreneurship

Even though males and females have a relatively high similarity in the level of knowledge and skills to start a business, ratios of female employers and self-employed to female employment in Iraq (2019), according to ILO estimations, are 0.63% and 9.48%, respectively. While these ratios for males were 2.84% and 23.96%.

Activating the role of women in entrepreneurship, encouraging them, developing programs to equalize the opportunities, making social services available and raising awareness on the importance of the role of females in business is essential to develop this framework.



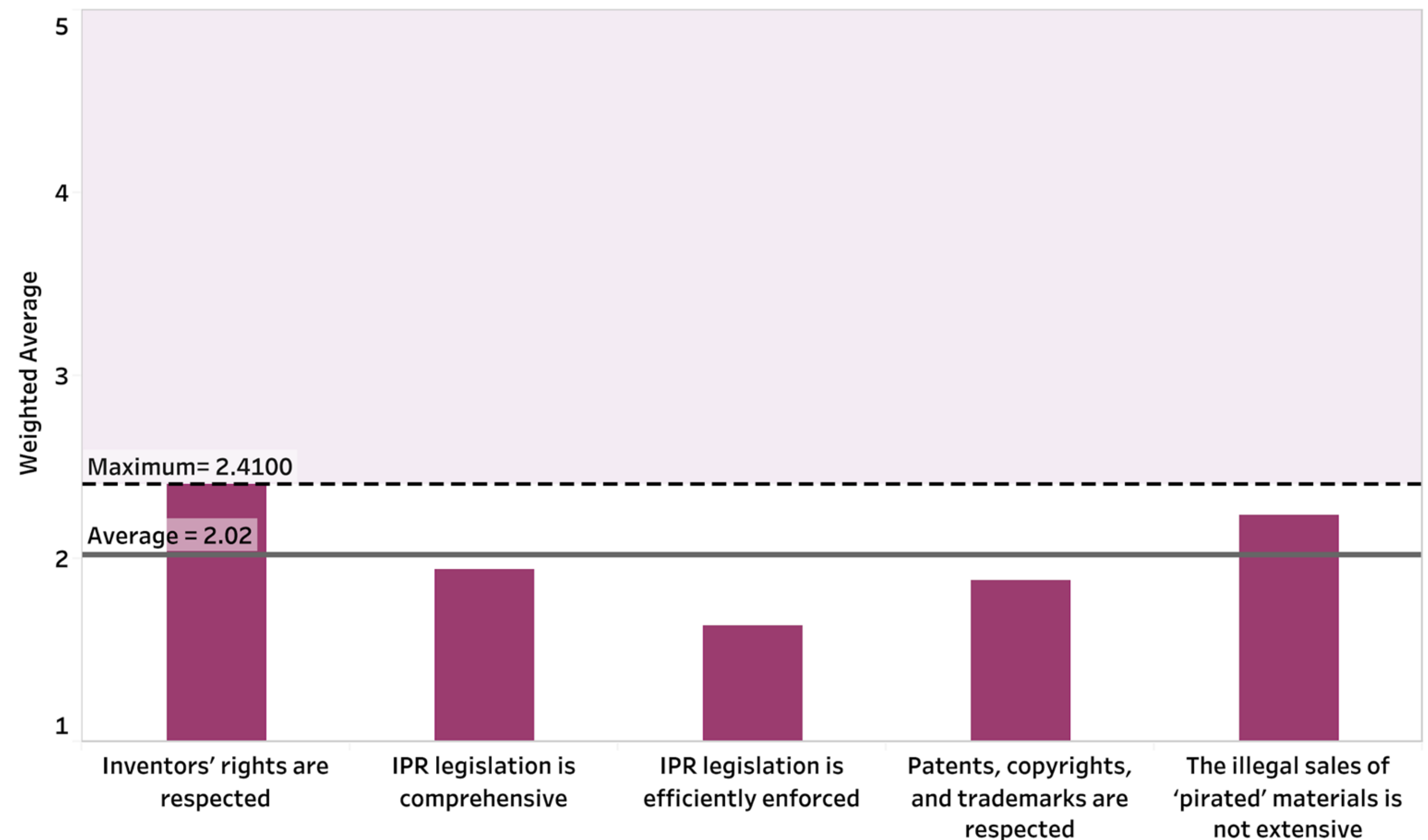
* No available data on other MENA countries

Intellectual Property

This framework examines the presence of conditions that would provide protection for intellectual property rights. The scores of this framework are significantly low indicating a need for the government to legislate and enforce laws to protect intellectual property

The items of the framework are:

- 1) It is widely recognized that inventors' rights for their inventions should be respected
- 2) The intellectual property rights (IPR) legislation is comprehensive
- 3) The intellectual property rights (IPR) legislation is efficiently enforced
- 4) New and growing firms can trust that their patents, copyrights and trademarks will be respected
- 5) The illegal sales of 'pirated' software, videos, CDs and other copyrighted or trademarked products is not extensive

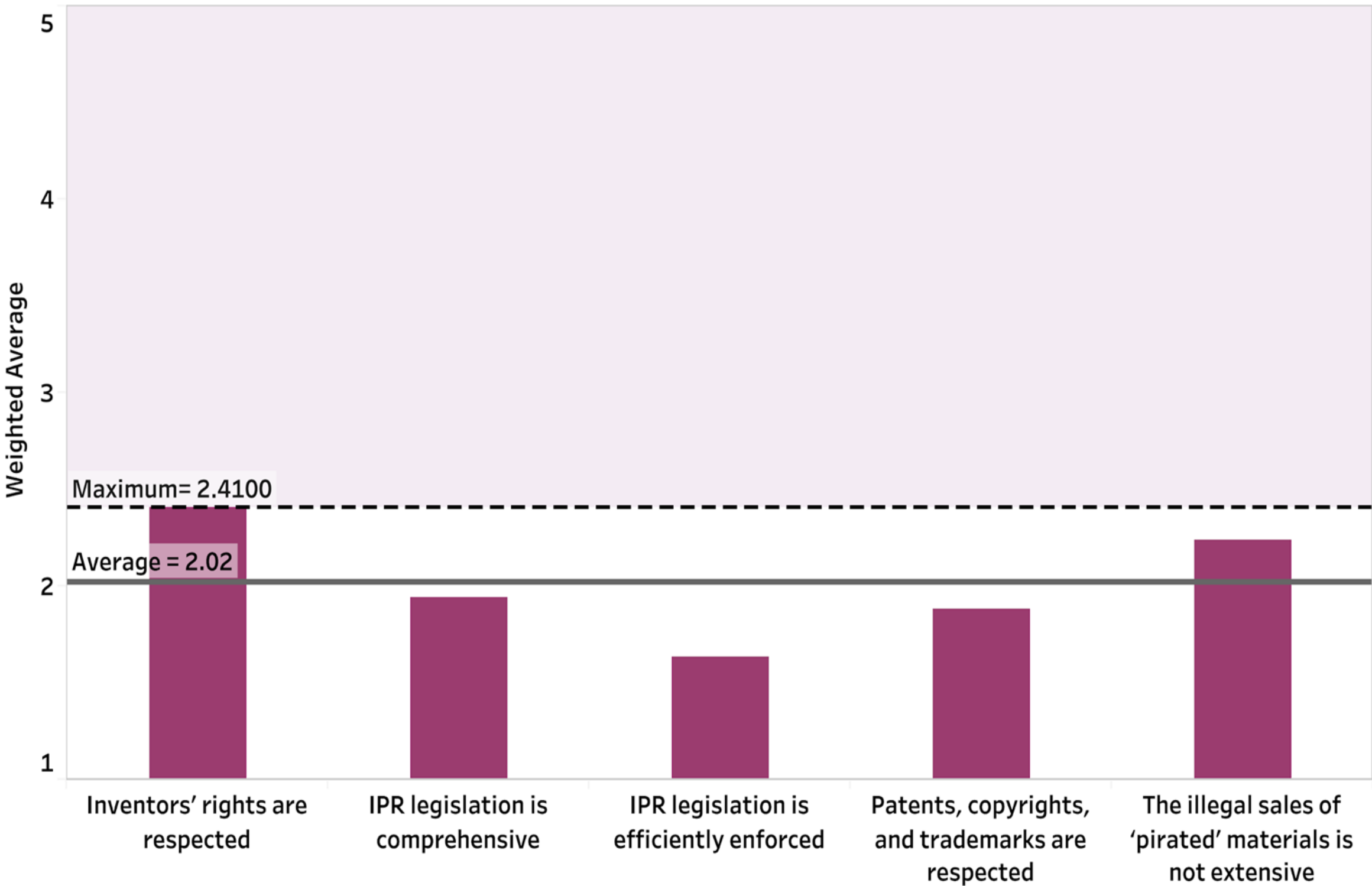


Intellectual Property

Intellectual properties are intangible; they result from creativity and innovation such as copyright, patents and trademarks. Protection against intellectual theft is essential for creative individuals and businesses to function in any country.

In Iraq, intellectual property, especially the tech-related is not protected. Software products are easily shared in an illegal manner and the pirated materials sales are extensive.

New laws and, more importantly, law enforcement, are needed in order to protect the inventors' rights and businesses' rights.



* No available data on other MENA countries

Recommendations

1. Enabling access to finance through banks, governmental support and by encouraging more private individuals to invest, such as activating angel networks to further nourish the overall financial support.
2. Practical, less strict and more convenient policies are needed in order to support startups and SMEs
3. Establishing business parks and one-stop shop for business registration is essential to develop a proper entrepreneurial ecosystem.
4. Conducting training programs related to entrepreneurship needs to be offered through incubation programs, under- or postgraduate university training programs (and other institutional programs). Also, women entrepreneurship and empowerment programs are much needed.
5. Primary and Secondary education systems should involve classes aiming to raise awareness about how important entrepreneurship is. Also, College students should be exposed to a comprehensive understanding of the market and aim to develop their future innovation.
6. There is an urgent need to develop new curricula for universities that involve entrepreneurship knowledge and practice.
7. Activating the connection between startups and universities' labs and research units with incubators and other entrepreneurship-centered programs is a must to develop new firms
8. Availability of consultancy, banking and other needed services can be a starting point on which gaps in other frameworks can be filled by further development of this framework.

Recommendations

9. Law enforcement is much needed for Iraqi market to encourage new firms to form.
10. Developing the infrastructure and providing access to facilities for startups and SMEs is essential to develop a growing private sector
11. encourage the youth to become self-sufficient or by providing governmental and non-governmental programs to emphasize autonomy and personal initiatives.
12. More youth should be encouraged to take advantage of the available opportunities. Also, establishing a common belief among youth about the need for entrepreneurship is a must.
13. Further support for training programs offered by local organizations and companies is needed to involve communities and regions beyond the current entrepreneurship-oriented community.
14. Encouraging women, developing programs to equalize the opportunities, making social services available and raising awareness on the importance of the role of females in business is essential to develop the “Women and Entrepreneurship” framework.
15. Primary and Secondary education systems should involve classes aiming to raise awareness about how important entrepreneurship is. Also, College students should be exposed to a comprehensive understanding of the market and aim to develop their future innovation.
16. New laws and, more importantly, law enforcement are needed in order to protect inventors’ rights and businesses’ rights.

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