



# STARTUP ECOSYSTEM REPORTS

Global Innovation Hubs, Founder Dynamics & Unicorn Activity  
2026 Global Edition | vsure investment affairs

Mapping the world's most dynamic startup ecosystems and the forces shaping them.

## Executive Summary

The global startup ecosystem continues to mature and diversify. While Silicon Valley remains the world's premier innovation hub, the concentration of startup activity has measurably shifted: non-US ecosystems accounted for 54% of new unicorns minted in 2024 and H1 2025. India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem by deal count. Southeast Asia and the Middle East are growing rapidly. AI is the defining mega-theme — an estimated 1 in 3 new startups founded in 2025 has an AI-native product strategy.

<b>1,850+</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>\$6.2T</b>	<b>3rd</b>
Active Unicorns Globally	New Startups with AI Core	Total Unicorn Valuation	India: Global Startup Rank

## Global Ecosystem Rankings

Ecosystem quality is assessed across six dimensions: talent density, capital access, regulatory environment, infrastructure, market size, and exit liquidity. The United States maintains the top position but its lead on capital access and talent density has narrowed as other ecosystems invest aggressively in these dimensions. China is assessed separately given its distinct policy and market dynamics.

Rank	Ecosystem	Overall Score	Unicorns	Capital Access	Standout Sector
1	Silicon Valley, US	98	550+	Exceptional	AI / Deep Tech
2	New York, US	88	210+	Excellent	Fintech / Media
3	London, UK	84	180+	Excellent	Fintech / AI
4	Beijing, China	82	160+	Strong	EV / AI / Consumer
5	Bengaluru, India	79	110+	Good	SaaS / Fintech
6	Tel Aviv, Israel	77	75+	Strong	Cybersecurity / Defense
7	Singapore	76	65+	Good	Fintech / Deep Tech
8	Berlin, Germany	73	60+	Good	Climate Tech / SaaS
9	Paris, France	72	55+	Improving	AI / Luxury Tech
10	Seoul, South Korea	71	50+	Good	Gaming / BioTech

## Unicorn Dynamics

The unicorn count (private companies valued at \$1B+) now stands at over 1,850 globally, with a combined valuation exceeding \$6.2 trillion. However, valuation integrity has become a key issue: an estimated 25–30% of unicorns from 2020–2022 vintages carry 'paper' valuations that are substantially higher than their current fair market value as evidenced by secondary trades and down-round financing. New unicorn minting has slowed from the 2021 peak of ~630/year to approximately 180–220/year in 2024–2025, signaling a return to pre-2020 quality thresholds.

### New Unicorns Minted by Sector (2025 YTD)

Sector	New Unicorns	% of Total	Avg Valuation at Entry
AI / ML	38	32%	\$1.4B
Healthcare / BioTech	18	15%	\$1.2B
Fintech	14	12%	\$1.1B
Climate / Energy	12	10%	\$1.6B
Defense / Dual Use	9	8%	\$2.1B
Enterprise SaaS	11	9%	\$1.0B
Other	17	14%	\$1.1B

## Regional Spotlight: India

India's startup ecosystem has experienced remarkable growth: 110,000+ recognized startups (DPIIT data), 110+ unicorns, and over \$70B in VC investment since 2019. The ecosystem is maturing from consumer-facing super-apps to enterprise SaaS, fintech infrastructure, and deeptech. India's 600M+ smartphone users, the UPI payments revolution, and a growing English-speaking technical talent base provide structural advantages. The government's Startup India program, PLI schemes, and ONDC initiative are reinforcing momentum.

- Bengaluru remains India's primary hub but Hyderabad, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, and Pune are meaningful ecosystems.
- D2C brands, MSME-focused SaaS, and agritech are distinctively Indian high-growth verticals.
- India produced 21 new unicorns in 2024 — third globally behind the US and China.
- Exit environment improving: India's IPO market was the world's most active by volume in 2024.
- Risk factors include regulatory uncertainty, infrastructure gaps in tier-2 cities, and talent attrition to global tech firms.

## Regional Spotlight: Middle East & Africa

The MENA startup ecosystem has attracted significant attention and capital, driven by sovereign wealth fund deployment, digitization of young demographics, and government vision plans (Saudi Vision 2030, UAE Centennial 2071). The UAE — particularly Dubai and Abu Dhabi — has emerged as a global fintech and crypto hub. Saudi Arabia's Neom-linked ventures, healthcare modernization, and entertainment digitization create

opportunities. Africa's ecosystem is small in absolute terms but growing rapidly, with Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, and South Africa leading.

Country/Region	2025 VC Investment	Top Sectors	Key Challenge
UAE	\$3.8B	Fintech, PropTech, AI	Talent retention
Saudi Arabia	\$2.1B	Healthtech, Entertainment	Regulatory pace
Egypt	\$0.8B	Fintech, E-commerce	FX instability
Nigeria	\$0.7B	Fintech, Logistics	Macro headwinds
Kenya	\$0.5B	AgriTech, Fintech	Scale limitations
South Africa	\$0.4B	Fintech, EdTech	Energy/political risk

## Founder & Talent Trends

Founder demographics are shifting. The average age of Series A founders has fallen to 31, driven by AI tools dramatically lowering the barrier to building software products. Repeat founders (2nd or 3rd-time entrepreneurs) receive a 32% valuation premium at Series A. Diversity metrics show modest improvement: female-only founding teams received 3.1% of VC in H1 2025 (up from 2.4% in 2022) but remain significantly underrepresented. Technical co-founder scarcity has been partially mitigated by AI coding tools — non-technical founders can now prototype and ship faster than ever.

*Data sourced from Crunchbase, PitchBook, Dealroom, and proprietary ResearchIQ surveys.*