Growth in the mobile industry has driven an unprecedented increase in digital inclusion in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), but there remains a gender gap in mobile ownership and use. Across low- and middle-income countries, 197 million fewer women than men own a mobile phone and 313 million fewer women use mobile internet.

Sub-Saharan Africa has one of the widest mobile gender gaps of any region. Addressing these gender gaps in Africa is important in order to deliver the significant benefits of mobile and the internet to women, their families, communities and the economy.

The GSMA Connected Women programme works with the mobile industry and key stakeholders to reduce the gender gap in mobile internet and mobile money services in low- and middle-income countries and unlock significant commercial and socio-economic opportunities.

All data in this document is sourced from the GSMA Intelligence Consumer Survey 2018, which has over 20,000 respondents from 18 LMICs, including seven in Africa.

Get in touch to find out more: connectedwomen@gsma.com
The Mobile Gender Gap: Africa

MOBILE INTERNET USE

• Looking beyond mobile ownership, the gender gap widens further for mobile internet
• Women in all surveyed African countries are less likely than men to be aware of mobile internet
• Women in Africa are 41% less likely than men to use the internet on a mobile phone
• For many internet users in Africa, particularly women, mobile is their sole or primary means of accessing the internet. For example in Kenya 75% of women and 63% of men who used the internet in the past three months at the time of surveying, did so only on a mobile

Awareness of mobile internet is consistently lower for women than it is for men

The top barriers to mobile internet use are Literacy and Skills and Affordability

The mobile internet gender gap is widest in countries where penetration is lowest

FURTHER ACTION IS NEEDED TO CLOSE THE MOBILE GENDER GAP IN AFRICA

Closing the gender gap in mobile ownership and use in Africa can deliver significant commercial and economic returns, and help to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To close the mobile gender gap in Africa, stakeholders should work to:

1. Understand and address women’s needs and barriers, and consider the effect of social norms
2. Involve women users in the design and implementation of products, services and policies
3. Improve the quality and availability of gender-disaggregated data, and set gender-equity targets

Stakeholders should also address specific barriers to mobile ownership and use that disproportionately affect women – in particular those relating to:

- Accessibility Including to quality network coverage, handsets, electricity, agents and formal IDs
- Affordability Including handsets, tariffs, data and transaction fees
- Usability Including of handsets and services and addressing a lack of awareness and understanding
- Safety and Security Including addressing harassment, theft, fraud and security
- Relevance of policies, content, products and services

For stakeholder-specific recommendations to address each of these barriers, and further information on the mobile gender gap in low- and middle-income countries, see The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2019.