The Mobile Gender Gap: Asia

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 LMICs, 197 million fewer women than men own a mobile phone and 313 million fewer women use mobile internet.

The mobile gender gap varies greatly across Asia. South Asia has the largest mobile gender gap of any region worldwide, while the most digitally mature LMICs in East Asia & Pacific have more equal levels of mobile ownership and use. Targeted action to address the mobile gender gap where it is widest in Asia is critical in order to deliver the potentially life-enhancing benefits of mobile including access to mobile internet to women, their families, communities and the economy.
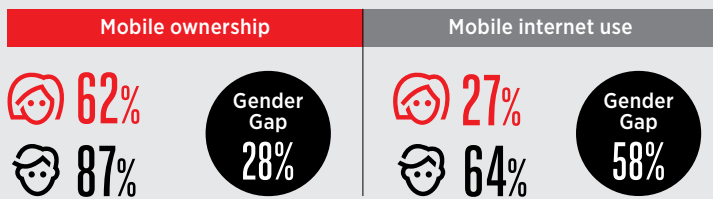
The GSMA Connected Women programme works with the mobile industry and key stakeholders to reduce the gender gap in mobile internet and mobile money services in LMICs and unlock significant commercial and socio-economic opportunities.

These findings are based on the 2018 GSMA Intelligence Consumer Survey, which has over 20,000 respondents from 18 LMICs, including six in Asia.
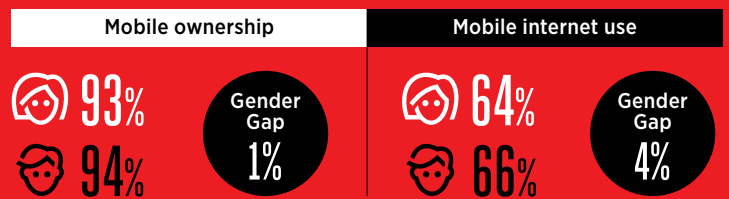
Get in touch to find out more: connectedwomen@gsma.com

KEY STATISTICS FOR ASIA

South Asia

Mobile ownership		Mobile internet use	
62% (female) 87% (male)	Gender Gap 28%	27% (female) 64% (male)	Gender Gap 58%

Base: Adult population 18+

East Asia & Pacific

Mobile ownership		Mobile internet use	
93% (female) 94% (male)	Gender Gap 1%	64% (female) 66% (male)	Gender Gap 4%

Base: Adult population 18+

Gender gap in ownership / use (%) =

$$\frac{\text{Male owners / users (\% of male population)} - \text{Female owners / users (\% of female population)}}{\text{Male owners / users (\% of male population)}}$$

MOBILE OWNERSHIP

The top barriers to mobile ownership are Literacy and Skills and Affordability, with family disapproval also featuring as a major barrier in parts of South Asia
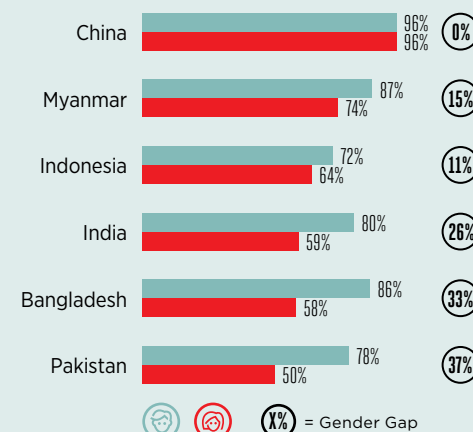
Based on the single most important barrier to owning a mobile phone identified by non-mobile owners, averaged across surveyed markets

	Women	Men
1	Literacy and skills	Literacy and skills
2	Affordability	Affordability
3	Relevance	Relevance
4	Family does not approve	Safety and security

Base: Non-mobile owners aged 18+

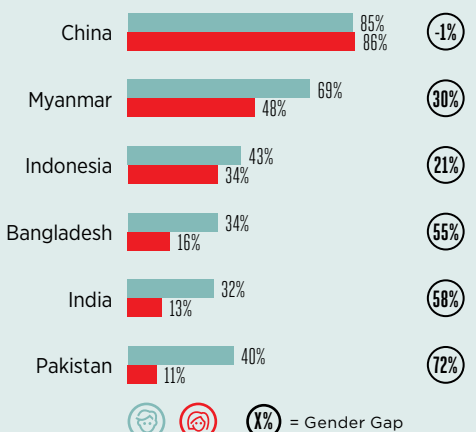### In Asia, women's level of mobile ownership is lower than men's, with the exception of China

Percentage of adult population who own a mobile, by country and gender

Country	Women	Men	Gender Gap
China	96%	96%	0%
Myanmar	74%	87%	15%
Indonesia	64%	72%	11%
India	59%	80%	26%
Bangladesh	58%	86%	33%
Pakistan	50%	78%	37%

(X%) = Gender Gap

Base: Total population aged 18+
n = from 509 to 1,118 for women and n = from 510 to 1,228 for men

The gender gap tends to widen further for smartphone ownership

Percentage of adult population who own a smartphone, by country and gender

Country	Women	Men	Gender Gap
China	86%	85%	-1%
Myanmar	48%	69%	30%
Indonesia	34%	43%	21%
Bangladesh	16%	34%	55%
India	13%	32%	58%
Pakistan	11%	40%	72%

(X%) = Gender Gap

Base: Total population aged 18+
n = from 509 to 1,118 for women and n = from 510 to 1,228 for men

Source: GSMA Intelligence Consumer Survey, 2018. A mobile owner is defined as a person who has sole or main use of a SIM card (or a mobile phone that does not require a SIM), and uses it at least once a month. The gender gap in mobile ownership refers to how much less likely a woman is to own a mobile than a man. For a full list of definitions see The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2019.

The Mobile Gender Gap: Asia

MOBILE INTERNET USE

- Looking beyond mobile ownership, the gender gap widens further for mobile internet
- Women in all surveyed Asian countries are less likely than men to be aware of mobile internet, with the exception of China
- Women in South Asia are 58% less likely than men to use the internet on a mobile phone. This represents a stark regional contrast compared to East Asia & Pacific where women are only 4% less likely than

men to use the internet on a mobile phone
- For many internet users in Asia, particularly women, mobile is their sole or primary means of accessing the internet. For example in Myanmar, 96% of women and 93% of men who have used the internet in the past three months did so only on a mobile
- The barriers to mobile internet use in South Asia are grounded in social norms that particularly affect women's access to and use of mobile

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

Based on the single most important barrier to using mobile internet identified by non-users, averaged across surveyed markets
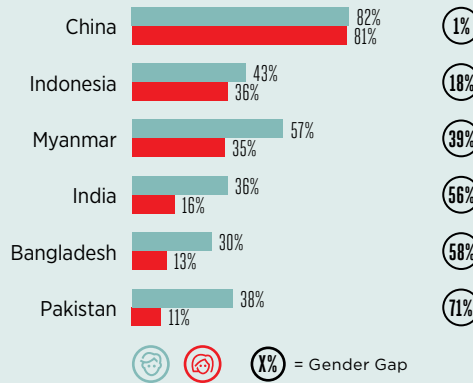
	Women	Men
1	Literacy and skills	Literacy and skills
2	Relevance	Affordability
3	Affordability	Relevance
4	Safety and security	Safety and security

Base: Adults aged 18+ who have used a mobile phone in the last three months but have never used mobile internet, despite being aware of mobile internet (excludes mobile users who are not aware of mobile internet)

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

Percentage of total adult population using mobile internet, by country and gender

Country	Men	Women	Gender Gap
China	82%	81%	1%
Indonesia	43%	36%	18%
Myanmar	57%	35%	39%
India	36%	16%	56%
Bangladesh	30%	13%	58%
Pakistan	38%	11%	71%

X% = Gender Gap

Base: Total Population aged 18+
n = from 509 to 1,118 for women and n = from 510 to 1,228 for men

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Most internet users across South and South-East Asia rely on mobile as the sole or primary means of accessing the internet

Percentage of the internet using population who accessed the internet in the last three months solely through a mobile phone, by country and gender

Country	Women	Men
Myanmar	93%	96%
Bangladesh	87%	96%
Indonesia	82%	86%
Pakistan	70%	71%
India	68%	61%
China	28%	34%
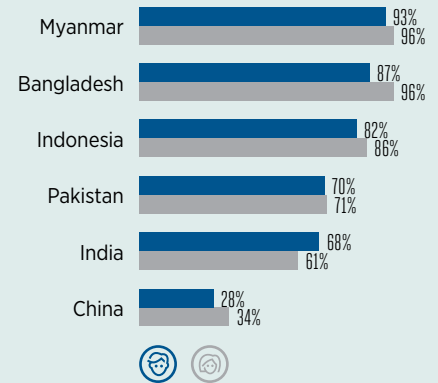
Base: Total Population aged 18+
n = from 61 to 827 for women and n = from 160 to 870 for men

Source: GSMA Intelligence Consumer Survey, 2018. A mobile internet user is defined as a person who has used the internet on a mobile phone at least once in the last three months. Mobile internet users do not have to personally own a mobile phone. The gender gap in mobile internet use refers to how much less likely a woman is to use mobile internet than a man.

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

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

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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

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5 GENDER EQUALITY