The Mobile Gender Gap: Africa

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

KEY MOBILE GENDER GAP STATISTICS FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Mobile ownership
% of adult population in Sub-Saharan Africa

69% 82% **15%** Gender gap

Mobile internet use
% of adult population in Sub-Saharan Africa

29% 49% **41%** Gender gap

Gender gap in ownership / use (%) =
Male owners / users (% of male population) — Female owners / users (% of female population)
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Male owners / users (% of male population)

MOBILE OWNERSHIP

The top barriers to mobile ownership are Affordability and Literacy and Skills
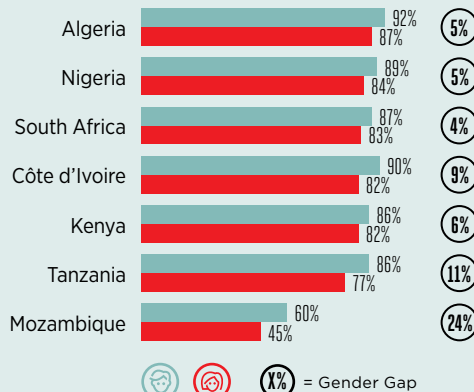
Based on the single most important barrier to owning a mobile phone identified by non-mobile owners, averaged across surveyed markets

	Women	Men
1	Affordability	Affordability
2	Literacy and skills	Literacy and skills
3	Safety and security	Safety and security
4	Network coverage	Relevance

Base: Non-mobile owners aged 18+

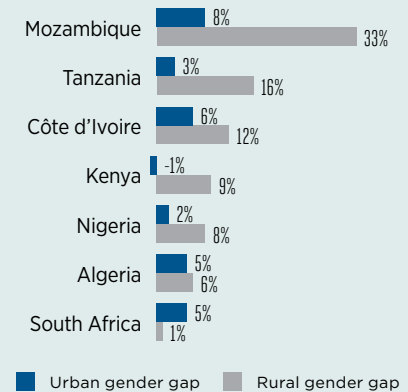### In all African countries surveyed, women's level of mobile ownership is lower than men's

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

Country	Men	Women	Gender Gap
Algeria	92%	87%	5%
Nigeria	89%	84%	5%
South Africa	87%	83%	4%
Côte d'Ivoire	90%	82%	9%
Kenya	86%	82%	6%
Tanzania	86%	77%	11%
Mozambique	60%	45%	24%

(X%) = Gender Gap

Base: Total population aged 18+
n = from 508 to 588 for women and n = from 438 to 567 for men

The Gender Gap in mobile ownership is wider in rural areas than urban areas

Percentage difference in rate of mobile ownership by men and women in urban and rural areas, by country

Country	Urban gender gap	Rural gender gap
Mozambique	8%	33%
Tanzania	3%	16%
Côte d'Ivoire	6%	12%
Kenya	-1%	9%
Nigeria	2%	8%
Algeria	5%	6%
South Africa	5%	1%

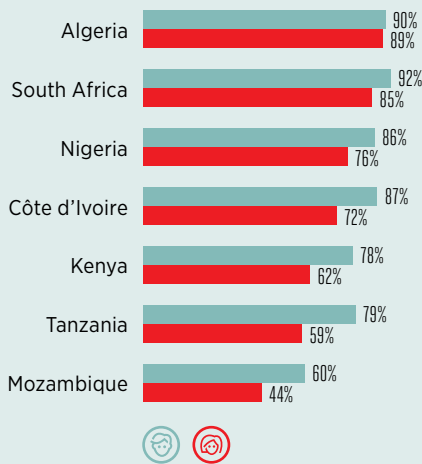■ Urban gender gap   ■ Rural gender gap

Base: Total population aged 18+
n = from 191 to 367 for urban women, n = from 157 to 376 for urban men, n = from 141 to 397 for rural women and n = from 153 to 343 for rural men

Source: GSMA Intelligence 2019. 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.

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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

Percentage of total adult population, by country and gender

Country	Women	Men
Algeria	89%	90%
South Africa	85%	92%
Nigeria	76%	86%
Côte d'Ivoire	72%	87%
Kenya	62%	78%
Tanzania	59%	79%
Mozambique	44%	60%

Base: Total population aged 18+ A person is considered aware of mobile internet if they have either used mobile internet before, or have not used mobile internet but are aware they can access the internet on a mobile phone. n = from 508 to 588 for women and n = from 438 to 567 for men

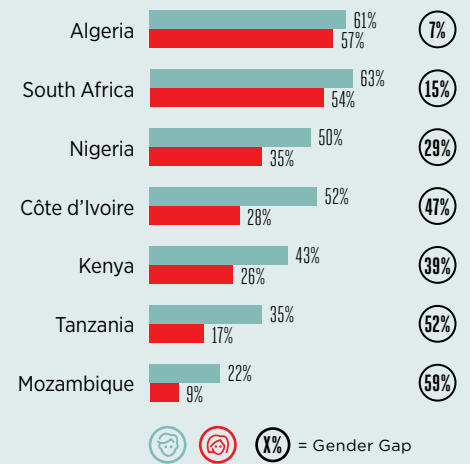### The top barriers to mobile internet use are Literacy and Skills and Affordability

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	Affordability	Affordability
3	Relevance	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	Women	Men	Gender Gap
Algeria	57%	61%	7%
South Africa	54%	63%	15%
Nigeria	35%	50%	29%
Côte d'Ivoire	28%	52%	47%
Kenya	26%	43%	39%
Tanzania	17%	35%	52%
Mozambique	9%	22%	59%

(X%) = Gender Gap

Base: Total population aged 18+
n = from 508 to 588 for women and n = from 438 to 567 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 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

5 GENDER EQUALITY

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.